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THE TEMPLETON MEMOIRS

DOROTHY DANIELS

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THE TEMPLETON MEMOIRS

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ONE/

I RARELY followed the court calendar, for I had made it a rule not to become emotionally involved with any of the defendants who appeared before Judge Hamish Gaylord, Superior Court, Criminal Division, State of New York. Also, I was kept quite busy taking dictation. I felt a modest pride that I was one of the very few female court officials in the country.

My position was simple enough. I took shorthand of every word said during the trial, and then I transcribed them on one of the new typewriter machines, which I had mastered to a considerable degree. About the only thing I could not do with that new-fangled device was to lift it. But then, nobody expected me to, for I was only five feet four and I weighed a scant one hundred pounds.

I place a wooden nameplate on my desk when I work. It reads:

At the age of twenty, I felt pleased with the progress I had made, although I wish to give a large part of the credit to Judge Hamish Gaylord, an old and dear friend of my dead parents. Since I had no living relatives, Judge Hamish took me under his wing after the death of my mother and father.

He was a widower and childless and, therefore, he was a lonely man. He did his best to ease my loss after my father passed away, one year after my mother. I was then only sixteen. Judge Hamish saw to it that the small estate left by my father was suitably expended for my personal needs and education. It was he who suggested that I learn shorthand and acquire skill in the use of the typewriter. He guided my steps and was ever ready to give me counsel. and when I had completed my education—and just in time, for papa's savings were just about used up—Judge Hamish saw to it that I was given employment in his court.

It was quite an honor, and once I had overcome my awe and fright at being in the presence of such personages as famous attorneys, as well as criminals of known ill-repute, I fell into the work quite easily and with an aptitude that rewarded

me with words of high praise. I was pleased, and I knew Judge Hamish was pleased also, for I had not let him down. I was pleased for another reason. The year of training I had acquired in the courtroom had given me a poise and self-assurance I would never have acquired otherwise.

Now, I looked about the courtroom, which was well crowded. That always meant a sensational case. I knew that this one was indeed sensational. It was the murder case against Joel Templeton, who was supposed to have killed his wife.

Two bailiffs led Joel Templeton into court soon after I'd taken my place at the desk close by the witness stand. I arranged my pencils and my notebooks, and then I looked up to give a casual glance at Mr. Templeton. At that very moment, he happened to glance my way and our eyes met.

I looked away quickly, lest he see my surprise, for he wasn't at all the type of man I had expected. I really don't know what I did expect, but I suppose that, since he was to be tried for the murder of his wife, I had scarcely thought I would see a man whose mere presence in a room would command attention.

He was tall and built like an athlete, with broad shoulders, which tapered down to a slenderness that was surprising in a man his age. Not that I mean to imply he was old. I would judge him to be in his early thirties, but even so, his hair

was beginning to silver at the temples, giving him quite an elegant appearance. His face was rugged, with a determined chin and the most-alive blue eyes I had ever seen.

I stole another casual glance his way and noted that his lawyer was talking earnestly and that Mr. Templeton had his head bent to hear. Apparently the attorney didn't wish what he was saying to be heard by ears other than those of his client. I noticed that one side of Mr. Templeton's mouth twisted in a sardonic grin as he listened; then, as quickly, he sobered as if he weren't especially pleased at what he had heard. Nor did the attorney appear to be pleased at what he was saying. While I was boldly staring at the pair, Mr. Templeton looked again in my direction, and his eyes held mine until I turned my attention to my pencils and pads.

Then, much to my relief, there was a flurry as court was called to order. The lawyers assumed their places, and Judge Hamish Gaylord walked up onto the bench. He was a tall, slender man in his late sixties, eminently fair and, when need be, most severe. Clever lawyers had stopped trying their legal tricks in his court long before, for he knew them all.

The charge was read after Joel Templeton rose. Though he must have spent some time in jail, he was well dressed, giving evidence that his

apparel had been sent in freshly pressed for the occasion. As he faced the bench and listened to himself being charged with the murder of his wife, every eye in the courtroom was on him, for he made a striking appearance. The only betrayal of emotion he displayed was the slight twitching of a muscle in his lower left cheek.

For some reason, a feeling of panic pierced me as I regarded this mature, poised man whose life might suddenly be cut off were he to be sentenced for the murder of his wife. I was shocked at my emotion and once again toyed with my pencils and pads in an effort to calm myself.

The attorneys in the case made a number of motions that had to be considered, and so there was nothing for me to do but sit idly by. Court was placed in recess while some unexpected legal tangle was ironed out in chambers.

Just then, Mr. Templeton started to cough. He paused and then coughed again. Obviously, the man was in discomfort, for he ran a finger around his collar, apparently in an effort to loosen it. Then he coughed again, and this time the siege was more severe. No one paid any attention to his discomfort, but I could no longer stand it.

I rose and went into one of the offices off the courtroom for a glass of water; then I returned and brought it to Mr. Templeton.

He tried to thank me, but choked on the words.

However, his eyes reflected his gratitude at my thoughtfulness.

"Don't talk," I said quietly. "Just sip the water —slowly, so you won't choke on it."

He did as I suggested, and I moved away from him to relieve him of any self-consciousness. I stood slightly behind him so that he could not see me, but I could observe when he had finished drinking. Then I moved up to him and asked if he would like more water.

"No, thank you," he said, handing me back the glass. "It was most thoughtful of you. My gratitude knows no bounds."

I smiled. "It might be wise for you to sit back and relax so you won't get another spell of coughing," I said.

"I don't know what caused it," he said, looking abashed.

"Nerves sometimes will do it," I said, believing that could well be the case.

"If so, its understandable," he replied, and settled back in his chair.

I returned to my desk and picked up a newspaper. Court procedure consists, to a large extent, in waiting and waiting, and I always made it a point to keep something on hand to read. By strange coincidence, the leading article was about the coming execution of William Kemperer at Sing Sing Prison. He would be the first man to die in

the electric chair in the year 1890. I shuddered, wondering if Mr. Templeton would be the second.

I tried to shake off the gloomy feeling by reminding myself of what Judge Gaylord had told me about not becoming involved in the problems of the defendants tried in this court. He had gone on to explain that were I to do so, I could not carry out my duties competently, and it would be necessary for me to seek a position elsewhere. But what I told myself was of no avail.

I had been impressed by Mr. Joel Templeton's appearance. He seemed a most unlikely individual to be tried for the murder of his wife. I found it difficult to believe he could have committed such an act; yet he would not be here if the State did not believe it to be so. I had gone to his aid when he had that coughing spell, for I had felt concern over his discomfort. And I had heard him speak. I liked the deep, masculine tone of his voice. I liked the sincere gratitude evidenced in his eyes. I liked Mr. Joel Templeton, despite the charge of murder that was about to be placed against him.

Thanks goodness, I could set my paper down, for the printed words were a blur before my eyes, so engrossed was I in thoughts of the about-to-be defendant. Court was reconvened and they were now ready to select the jury—or so I thought.

The District Attorney rose and addressed the

court while my pencil flew over the lines of my pad.

"Your Honor, in view of the fact that new evidence has come before my office, the State now wishes to drop all charges against the accused, Joel Templeton."

The defense lawyer was on his feet now. They'd discussed all of this in chambers and they were merely making public the decision they'd arrived at. At any rate Joel Templeton wasn't going to be tried at this time, and a wave of relief swept through me.

"Your Honor, the defendant was arrested and formally charged with this crime. He was locked up because the offense was not one to which bail applied. He was brought into court this morning and formally charged by the clerk. Now the State admits it has no case and wishes the matter dropped. It is the contention of the defense, Your Honor, that the defendant should now be found not guilty and should be discharged by the court. In view of the fact that the State went so far in pressing its case, we feel that the defendant would be in double jeopardy were he rearrested and tried again."

"Motion denied," Judge Gaylord said promptly, and the hearing was over. My notes hadn't filled more than two pages of shorthand and would occupy no more than one legal-sized page of transcript. I gathered up my pencils and my notebooks

and prepared to leave the courtroom; yet I continued to remain in my seat, and color flamed my face. I knew very well why. I was wondering if Mr. Joel Templeton would approach me—not just wondering, but wanting him to. I raised my head slowly and sought him out in the disappearing crowd. He was easily discernible, for he towered over everyone. Yet he never once turned back to give me even a farewell glance. I sensed a feeling of let-down, and I rose, gathering up my notebooks and pencils. I was suddenly curious to know more about the case—and the man.

I knocked on the Judge's door, and he called out a command to enter. He had removed his judicial robes and was seated behind his desk, relaxing in shirt and fancy red sleeve garters.

"Come in, Lorrie," he said affably. "Fastest murder trial on record, I believe. I wish all murder trials were that way."

"What happened, Judge? I thought a jury was going to be impaneled."

"So did everyone else, but the prosecuting attorney made a colossal blunder. Templeton was accused of murdering his wife and concealing her body. He was arrested when the prosecutor thought he had enough evidence to warrant it. The evidence consisted of some of the missing woman's jewelry and an assortment of charred bones found at the scene of a fire on a remote section of the Templeton estate."

"But wasn't that evidence enough?" I asked.

"Would have been except that Templeton's lawyers had the bones examined, and the report just came in as court convened that they were male bones, not those of a female. Sort of threw a monkey wrench into the State's case."

The Judge was in a mood to talk, and I felt rewarded, for I was eager to learn all I could. "Who is this Mr. Joel Templeton?" I asked.

"Well, he comes of a famous—or perhaps infamous—family of seagoing people. His ancestors sailed ships all over the world, and they were tough and rather ruthless traders. It got them riches and fame and turned the new generations into landlubbers. Joel Templeton is the last of the line. He owns a large number of sailing vessels, and he is converting them into steam and building a whole new fleet of fast steamships."

"It does seem strange that a man of his standing would kill his wife," I observed.

The Judge's eyes regarded me wisely. "Why the great interest in this man, Lorrie?"

"I just don't think he looks and acts like a murderer," I said seriously.

"Do any of them? My dear child, I learned long ago that murderers have no distinctive markings. They look and act like anyone else. I do agree that a man of his stature would normally have the intelligence to handle any matter without resorting to violence, but then, the Templetons have always

been a violent family. The same blood runs through Joel's veins."

"In any case, I'm glad he's free."

"And handsome," Judge Gaylord said, his smile wry. "Very handsome, eh? And warm and friendly to boot. But he's more than ten years older than you. . . ."

"Why, Judge," I said, in pretended innocence, "whatever gave you the idea that I was interested in him?"

"You did, my dear child," Judge Gaylord said in a tone that told me better than words that I hadn't fooled him. "I never heard you ask so many questions about a man before."

"He merely aroused my pity," I insisted.

"And having aroused your pity, you became curious. That's all there is to it."

"Certainly," I replied, irked that the Judge could so easily see through my pretense. "I am certainly not overly interested in a man who has been arrested for the murder of his wife."

"Careful, Lorraine," the Judge cautioned. "He hasn't been found guilty."

"All right, Judge," I said with a sigh, in an admission of defeat. "I am curious. Truly, I cannot believe the man guilty. He seems to me a man of breeding and of excellent character."

"Don't you think, Lorraine, that without even knowing him, you've come to regard him in much esteem?"

"I fear I do," I replied, suddenly not reluctant to discuss Mr. Templeton; for I knew I would probably not set eyes on him again unless he reappeared in this court on the same charge of murder. "Tell me, Judge, what was Mrs. Templeton like?"

"I can't answer that question, for I never met the woman. And all I know about Mr. Templeton is in a business way. It's good. He's honest and fair; he pays good wages on his ships and supplies fine food and working conditions for his crews. He tolerates no slipshod methods, and he makes money. If one judges a man's character by those points, then he must be a fine individual. Now tell me what you intend to do with your six-week vacation when court suspends for the summer."

"I hope to find another position," I said. "I cannot afford not to be employed."

"My dear," Judge Gaylord said, leaning forward and regarding me kindly, "I know how very proud you are. But since the death of your parents, I have regarded you as the daughter I had always hoped to have, but never did. As you know, my wife was taken suddenly ill and died a few months after our marriage. I have since lived with my sister, who would welcome you into our home with as much warmth as I."

"Thank you, Judge," I said. "I am deeply touched by the offer you have made, not only now, but several times before. However, I feel I must make my own way in the world. It is, how-

ever, truly gratifying to know there is always a home awaiting me. It is also heartening to know that I have you to come to should I have any problems which, to me, seem insurmountable."

"Thank you, my dear," Judge Gaylord said, his smile benign. "Don't ever forget it."

"I won't," I promised.

"In the meantime, if I hear of anyone needing a female typewriter, I'll be sure to recommend you."

"Thank you, Judge. Now I must return to my work."

I typed up the transcript, filed some motions that had been entered in other cases, and generally caught up on my work. I hated to have the end of the week come, for that meant I'd be out of employment for a longer time than I could afford to be. I was grateful of Judge Gaylord's offer of a home, but I was determined to make my own way in the world.

I was growing very proficient in using the typewriter machine, and I truly considered it one of the marvels of the age. It hadn't been many months before that the machines had typed only capital letters, but now I could make neat copy with both capitals and lowercase.

When my work was finished, I protected the machine with its muslin covering, then washed the ink off my hands. I put on my little jacket and my feathered hat, and then I locked up the office and

walked briskly down the corridors of the court building. All the offices were closing, and people were leaving in goodly numbers; so I didn't notice him until he stepped out of a corridor and blocked my way.

I was so taken unawares that if he hadn't reached out and lightly grasped my arms, I would have collided with him.

"Miss Ward, forgive this unseemly intrusion, but I would consider it a great favor if you would give me a few minutes of your time."

I was still too stunned to reply. He apparently mistook my silence for disapproval of his behavior, which was indecorous; yet I could take no offense, for there was an expression in his face that gave his words a sense of urgency.

"I know this is extremely bold of me, and if you prefer not being seen talking to a man who has been the subject of so much adverse notice in the newspapers, I shall step aside and allow you to proceed."

"Mr. Templeton, truly I am surprised by your action, but perhaps I am also intrigued."

The merest trace of a smile touched his mouth. "In that case, will you dine with me?"

"No, sir." My answer was prompt. "Though not because of the reason for your being here today. It's just that we have not been formally introduced and I do not dine with strangers."

"That is to your credit," he observed. "How-

ever, I am not exactly a stranger, and while I am, at present, living under a cloud, I am hopeful of removing it. That is, with your help."

"Indeed," I said, astounded at such audacity. "And just how do you propose to do that?"

"This is not a very good place to converse," he said. "Will you do me the honor of accompanying me to my carriage, where we may sit and talk? Please believe me, Miss Ward, it is a matter of grave importance to me."

"In that case, I shall hear you out, though I make no promise of lending assistance to you in any way. However, I will say I was pleased that you were set free today."

"Thank you," he said. "I still don't like living under suspicion of murder, though."

He took my elbow and gently but surely led me through the crowds to the door. There was a carriage waiting half a block away. He removed his hat and bowed slightly as he extended his hand to help me enter. I stepped into the carriage and sat down. He quickly joined me and extended a bill to the driver, saying to him, "You may take a leisurely walk and work up an appetite."

The driver climbed down and made his way into the crowds now filling the streets, Joel Templeton asked my permission to light a cheroot, which I graciously gave, for I like the smell of fine tobacco.

He settled back and looked straight ahead. "Miss Ward," he said, "today I was set free of a

charge of murder, but the charge was not dismissed, as you know. I can be arrested again at any time."

"I'm quite aware of that, Mr. Templeton."

"Now this places me in a rather hazardous position. First, let me assure you that I did not kill my wife." His mouth compressed grimly for a moment before he continued. "I will admit I did not love her, but I did not kill her. It is, however, quite obvious that someone did, though why, I have no idea. Someone who tried to make it appear that I had destroyed her body by fire, but whoever it was failed quite miserably, I'm happy to say. This does not mean that person won't try again, and this brings me to the part which concerns you. I am going to look for a motive and the identity of the murderer in the history of my family. I intend to write my memoirs, putting on paper all I remember, so that somewhere along the line I may be able to guess who is responsible. Now I write poorly, and I am in need of a secretary for a month or so. I humbly seek your assistance."

"You are offering me such a position?" I asked, amazed at the suggestion.

"I am."

"May I ask why, sir?"

"Of course. I need someone I can trust. Also, someone who does not fear me. When I was in great discomfort this morning, you took pity on me and quickly came to my aid. It was a gracious

and warmhearted gesture on your part. It helped greatly to buoy up my spirits to know that you did not think of me as a revolting ogre."

"Why, Mr. Templeton," I said, astonished at his revelation, "I had no such thought."

His brief smile was pleased. "Now I am doubly reassured. Miss Ward, I know you can operate a typewriter machine, and I wish what I dictate transcribed into type. I presume, since you are a court reporter, you can take rapid shorthand."

"A court reporter, Mr. Templeton, uses the Pittman Method. It is more difficult to learn than the Gregg System, but it does enable me to take my notes at a very fast rate of speed. I have had no trouble in keeping up with anyone, not even during heated arguments between lawyers in court.

"That's what I want. I watched you work today—what little there was for you to do—and I liked the way you handled it. However, in order for you to work with me, it will be necessary that you reside in my home on Long Island. Will you do so?"

"I couldn't do that, Mr. Templeton."

"Now just a minute." His smile was indulgent. "There are several people living at Templeton Hall; so you will be well chaperoned, if that's what worries you. However, may I further assure you by stating that this is to be purely a business arrangement. I will pay you well. Thirty-five dollars a week with a guarantee of six weeks' work.

However, I would like an immediate acceptance or refusal so I may act accordingly. I am most interested in beginning the work immediately."

This offer of a position seemed the answer to a prayer. I had need of work through the summer, and at such an amazing salary, I could not afford to refuse. I had every confidence that Mr. Templeton was a gentleman.

As if to reassure me further, he broke into my thoughts, "Should you accept, I believe you will find Templeton Hall interesting. It's the family mansion and a rather interesting place. I might add that you should find the people living there rather intriguing."

"Mr. Templeton, as you must know, I have never accepted such a position before, but I shall be honest; I am in need of work, and so I do accept —on one condition."

"And that?" he asked.

"Judge Gaylord was a very close friend of my parents, who are both deceased. From the time of their deaths, he assigned himself as my guardian. I will be frank to admit that he has been my confidant, and I have always followed his advice."

"You are saying that your acceptance is based on his approval."

"I am."

"In that case, I am hopeful he will allow you to accept the position. I shall also make the daring

move of sending your ticket to the office tomorrow morning."

I suppose I should have been startled, but it seemed I was already becoming accustomed to this man's abruptness. "When do I start working for you?"

"Monday morning. However, I suggest you come to Templeton Hall on Sunday. Two adjoining rooms will be prepared for you. One will be your office, and you will do your work there. You will be supplied with a new typewriting machine and whatever else you may need."

"Mr. Templeton, may I remind you that I haven't given you definite word of my acceptance."

"I'm aware of that, Miss Ward, but I know Judge Gaylord's reputation for fairness, and I believe he knows mine. I rather have the feeling he will give his consent." He gave me a side glance as he added, "I am also of the opinion that you are an independent and strong-minded girl and that you will arrive at the depot Sunday afternoon, where a carriage will meet you."

"I fear you are presuming too much, Mr. Templeton. As you say, I am strong-minded; and on the basis of your recent statement, I might very well refuse."

"You might, but you won't," he replied, settling back in the seat and drawing on his cheroot.

"Being strong-minded isn't the same as being childish. If you were, I wouldn't even have suggested it, for the Hall isn't the most cheerful house. Nonetheless, it is an example of what my great-great-grandfather considered opulence. I consider it bad taste, and if I had time, I'd improve the place. One day I shall. However, you will see it as it is."

I smiled, reserving comment, and stirred as if to leave the carriage.

"Please don't go yet. I feel it only fair to tell you the type of work you will be required to do and also why I am hiring you. In that way, you can give Judge Gaylord a clear picture and I will be more certain that he will not object to your spending the summer at Templeton Hall."

"Very well, Mr. Templeton. I am most interested." I settled back, giving him my complete attention.

"My object is to attempt to unearth the scoundrel who murdered my wife. I shall endeavor to do so by writing the Templeton memoirs. It is something that has never been done by the Templetons. I'm the last of the clan, a widower with no children, and I expect the line will stop with me, for I'm not inclined to marry again."

"I think the work you have set out to do is quite worthy," I said. "I hope you will be successful in every respect. May I add that I, too, believe

that when Judge Gaylord hears your reason for offering me employment, he will not demur."

"I sincerely hope you are right, Miss Ward," he said. "And now, I shan't delay you further. Unless I may give you a ride to your destination?"

"No, thank you; I really prefer to walk."

He stepped down from the carriage, assisted me to the sidewalk, and tipped his hat as he bade me farewell.

I ate my solitary supper in a little restaurant not far from where I had a two-room flat. I'm sure I tasted none of the usually very fine food, for I was too excited at the prospect of spending a summer in a mansion on Long Island. Also, I was thinking of Judge Gaylord and wondering what his reaction would be. I hoped it would be favorable, for I found Mr. Templeton quite fascinating. His personality was strong and forceful; yet I believed he could be most kind when he chose.

At my flat, I inspected my wardrobe. While it was not extravagant, I felt it would do nicely, thanks to my proficiency with the needle and the good use to which I had put my sewing machine. I smiled as I went about my apartment, for I was looking forward to six weeks in the country. I wondered, though where Templeton Hall was. I had no concern on that score, however, for Mr. Templeton had told me he would send my tickets to the office.

The next morning I told Judge Gaylord, in detail, of my meeting with Mr. Templeton on the previous day and of his proposal. The Judge listened quietly, with somber mien. Nor did he speak for several moments after I had completed my story. I knew he was evaluating everything I had related, and I felt the first pangs of concern that he might refuse. Despite what Mr. Templeton had said I doubted I would scorn Judge Gaylord's sage advice.

"Well, my dear," Judge Gaylord said at last, "you have already found a position. The pay, of course, is excellent. As for the man, despite the cloud hanging over his head, I know nothing detrimental to his character. Therefore, I cannot advise you against accepting. However, I will tell you that the Templeton estate is on Long Island, about sixty miles from the city. It's a wild and desolate location, I am given to understand, but one in keeping with the history of the Templetons —that is, Joel Templeton's forebears."

"Oh, thank you, Judge," I exclaimed happily. "I had so hoped for your approval."

"And had I disapproved?" he asked, regarding me wisely.

I looked directly at him and sobered at once. "I don't know, Judge. I should hate to think I would be so ungrateful as to disregard your counsel."

He smiled. "In this case, my child, you have not done so. I hope I am not wrong to condone your

accepting this position. However, bear this in mind —should you need me, or should you feel at any time that you wish to leave, please send me word."

"I shall do so, Judge."

Judge Gaylord rose, moved around his desk, and lightly clasped my shoulders. "One thing more, Lorraine. Beware of Joel Templeton—he's an attractive man. Women have found him quite irresistible."

I was to think of Judge Gaylord's words many times in the days to come.

TWO/

I WAS completely oblivious to those around me as I took my seat on the train, for I was engrossed in thoughts of the pleasure of staying on Long Island during the summer, thus escaping the terrible heat of New York City. Therefore, when a gentleman removed his hat, bowed politely, and asked if the seat beside me were taken, I replied in the negative. Not that I would have lied about it, but I would have suggested he take another; for as my eyes scanned the length of the car, I could see many vacant seats available. However, it was too late; so I set my eyes straight ahead, wishing mightily that I had purchased a magazine so that I could devote myself to it.

However, I did note that he was a rather tall person, with a bowler hat, wing collar, and an expensively cut suit. He was clean-shaven, and the pungent fragrance of bay rum that surrounded him made it apparent that he had just left a barber

shop. He had a generous mouth, a somewhat soft chin line, and gray eyes that were alight in good humor. Had it not been for his gentlemanly manner, I would have suggested he remove himself, and had he refused to do so, I would have spoken to the conductor. But a moment later, my startlement was even greater.

"I do hope, Miss Ward, that you do not object to my sharing this seat with you."

My eyes widened in amazement as he spoke my name. He smiled, drawing off a pair of thin gloves as he did so. He placed these meticulously inside his hat and set it firmly on his lap.

He looked amused. "Tell me, please—how does one master the art of Pittman shorthand, to say nothing of remembering which keys on the typewriting machine to punch? I fear I would never be able to master one. I congratulate you on your ability."

I found my voice finally. "You seem not only to know my name, but to have knowledge of what I do. I am not, sir, aware that I have ever met you."

"My name is Philip Morgan. Undoubtedly you have heard of me?"

"I have not, sir. And I feel it most presumptuous of you to intrude."

"I daresay you're right," he agreed amiably. "But then, didn't Joel Templeton?"

"You know him?" I asked in surprise.

"I do," he replied. "Now may I remain?"

"I'm still puzzled as to how you knew me," I said, frowning as I regarded him.

"Suppose I tell you about Templeton Hall and its occupants. In that way, I can justify my sitting here."

"Is there any way I could stop you?" I asked, suddenly intrigued by this person, despite his failure to answer my question.

"I fear not," he said, and laughed briefly. "First of all, there is Joel's uncle Frank Elkin and his wife, Greta. They married and came to live with Joel—twenty odd years ago—and they must be enjoying themselves, for they've never once left the premises. There's Mrs. Davis, the housekeeper, and some servants. Also, Captain Walter Hoyt. He's the gardener and general handyman. You might think it rather strange for a man like that to carry the title of captain, and it would be, except that he really was a ship's captain. Now he's anchored to the land and he hates it. He'll undoubtedly hate you."

"In Heaven's name, why?" Truly, Mr. Morgan's desire to furnish me with the information concerning Templeton Hall made me completely forget his impudence.

"He just makes a habit of hating everybody. So now you are aware of the individuals with whom you will shortly meet. There will be others from time to time who come to partake of bed and board with Joel. They used to say that some of the

old Templeton sea captains had strange crews, but I doubt that any had a collection as unusual as Joel's."

"I must admit it's quite interesting, Mr. Morgan, but just why have you given me this information?"

"Simple, Miss Ward; quite simple—you will soon be one of them. Tell me, did you find Joel fascinating?"

I felt my face redden. "You excel in impudence, sir."

"I beg your forgiveness," he said, not sounding in the least contrite. "But all women fall in love with him. It's his ruggedness, his manliness, and his indifference to them. The Templeton men were all like that. But the women they married never fared too well. Take poor Bess, for instance."

"Bess?" I questioned.

"Joel's wife," he informed me. "Aren't you fearful of working for a man who lives under the suspicion of having murdered his wife?"

"It has not been proved, Mr. Morgan," I said, mindful of Judge Gaylord's words.

"So it hasn't. However, the Templeton men were not the genteel sort, and Joel follows the pattern, though it does seem to me that he would be incapable of such a thing. Nevertheless, as you said, it hasn't been proved; so we shall keep an open mind until it has, won't we?"

I regarded him with open animosity. "Mr.

Morgan, you apparently have forgotten that I have been employed by Mr. Templeton to assist him in compiling his memoirs. I do not intend to discuss my employer with you or anyone."

"Well spoken," he said, the bow of his head faintly mocking. "I can see that Joel has chosen wisely in selecting a typewriter. If I have not offended you too greatly, perhaps I may enlighten you as to a little of the history of the countryside through which we are passing."

"If you must talk, I would find that a far preferable topic of conversation."

He nodded in satisfaction, not in the least offended. I was of the opinion that one would be hard put to find something that would vex Mr. Morgan.

"It wasn't many years ago," Mr. Morgan began his story, "that these trains used to set fire to the crops and the trees. It got the farmers of Long Island so riled up they finally did something about it. They ripped up the ties and the tracks so many times that the railroad finally went bankrupt."

I couldn't help but burst into laughter, and after a moment Mr. Morgan joined me.

"Really, Mr. Morgan, you don't have to tell me such fanciful tales."

"You have a lovely laugh," he said. "A rippling sort of laugh. And I am not telling fanciful tales. That story is the absolute truth. And I will continue with it. Now the farmers need the railroad to

get their produce to market; so they've stopped such shenanigans. But the sparks from the engine still set fires, though not as often. There are not many people out this way, except for the farmers. The Templetons like privacy. That's why they built here more than a hundred years ago."

"It's quite a story," I admitted. "And I do believe you."

"Thank you," he replied with satisfaction. "I do hope I haven't bored you."

"Indeed you haven't," I replied. "Anything but that, sir."

"I am pleased," he said. "However, since any further tales I tell you might spoil the good impression I have made on you, I shall take my leave and retire to the smoker. Thank you for allowing me the satisfaction of your company. For now, good-bye."

He bowed, put his hat on carefully, drew on his gloves, and walked down the aisle and out of the car. I was too astounded to register even surprise, though I was curious, for this man knew everything about me, although he was a total stranger to me. He had successfully evaded every question I had asked; yet he had never been unpleasant or boorish. In fact, I rather liked him. So I smiled, for he had not only acquainted me with the household of Mr. Templeton, but he had also made my journey interesting. I felt certain I would meet him again soon.

I was now able to watch the countryside go by. We often passed so close to trees that their leaves brushed against the windows, and I could understand the danger of fires. As we continued on our way, the farms began to grow larger and larger, and the train made fewer stops.

Finally, my station was called by the conductor, who finished going through the train and then returned to help me with my bags. I stepped off the train onto a dreary-looking platform without a depot. The conductor set the bags down beside me, wished me luck, and raised his hand to signal the engineer. The train pulled out, leaving me standing there. I felt as if I had been set down in the midst of nowhere.

Mr. Templeton had told me someone would be sent to meet me, but apparently no one had. I didn't even know in which direction to turn. Just north of the platform there was a dirt road that made a sharp curve, to vanish among the trees and fields. I supposed I should have to walk, but what I'd do with my baggage was a puzzle.

Then I heard the sound of an approaching carriage and after a few moments a black-and-red vehicle, behind a high-stepping, well-groomed horse, pulled up. Mr. Morgan jumped down from the seat, swept off his hat with a flourish, and invited me aboard.

Then I did laugh, because I knew it had all been

a trick on his part. He put my bags aboard and climbed onto the seat.

"Did you have a nice trip, Miss?" he inquired.

"Delightful," I said. "A most mysterious young man intruded on my privacy to hold my attention during a great part of it."

"Ah—he was an entertaining fellow, no doubt. So now the cat is out of the bag, and you know that I, too, am a part—but only a small one—of Templeton Hall. The plain fact is that my father and Joel Templeton are partners in the shipping industry. I'm a junior partner—very junior so far as my father is concerned. It was Joel who asked me to see to your comfort on the train and to bring you to the Hall. I hope I fulfilled his request."

"Thank you for the explanation," I said. "It was a long time coming, I must say, but a satisfactory one. How far is the drive?"

"About forty minutes, though I can trim that some if you agree to hang on with both hands. This is Sandy, one of the faster of the Templeton horses. Joel had the horse and carriage waiting at the livery stable."

"Livery stable?" I looked around. "I see no sign of any sort of building."

"There's a small town around the bend in the road. It's a bashful town and hides from the curious. We are moving away from it. Some day I'll show you around our town. No . . . not our

town, not even my town, and you won't like it either. Their town, and they can have it."

"I should still like to see it one day," I said.

"As good as done," he declared. He was willing, as well as being one of the most overconfident young men I had ever met.

"Is Mr. Templeton at the Hall now?" I asked.

"I expect so. He spends most of his time there. I wish I did, now that you're going to be a member of the household. I shall make it my business to visit more often, and I may even stay a few days beginning now. I can always think up some excuse."

"I came here to work, Mr. Morgan. I fear I shall not have much time for recreation."

"Oh, Joel won't work you too hard. We can meet every day after hours and play croquet, and you can tell me all of the evil facts he dictated to you."

"I shall tell you nothing, for I consider this work of mine to be of the most confidential nature. Therefore, Mr. Morgan, perhaps you have already lost interest in the game of croquet—at least, as far as having me for a partner."

"On the contrary," he replied good-naturedly. "I shall be impatient for you to join me so that I may see the astonishment on your face at what has been revealed to you of the Templetons. I assure you, you will be shocked."

It was my turn to smile in amusement. "You

may save your breath, Mr. Morgan. I feel that I know you now, and I am certain this is just one of your attempts to disquiet me."

Mr. Morgan threw back his head in laughter. "Wait until you hear the story. The Templeton men consisted of a series of blackguards and pirates. It seems slightly ridiculous to me that Joel feels that, by putting the history of the Templetons on paper, he will uncover a motive for the death of his wife."

"If she is dead," I commented. "Her body has not been found."

"Quite so," he replied.

I changed the topic of conversation to making various comments on the beautiful countryside about us. I also asked questions about the area. Philip Morgan, taking the hint, answered them to my satisfaction.

We climbed a long, low hill; when I had topped it, I saw the ocean stretched endlessly before me. The lovely sight all but took my breath away, for the afternoon sun shone on the sea, and the waves seemed to be coated with frost as they billowed and ran their way in from the depths to the shore.

There didn't seem to be very much beach, and what there was consisted mostly of rocks. We drove along this road, skirting the ridge, and ten minutes later I saw Templeton Hall for the first time.

It was a two-and-one-half-story wooden struc-

ture, painted white. In the center was a colonnaded porch and entrance so charming as to make me speak out in admiration.

"It's a pretty place from here," Philip Morgan agreed. "But the outside is deceptive. It's unique, also, in that it has two entrances to the same entry hall. The side you now see is called the land front. The opposite side faces the beach and the sea and is called the ocean front. It too has a formal entry, a large porch. It is a house without a back door. Of course that's a fallacy, for there are several other doors leading into the house."

"It seems tremendous," I observed.

"It is. Joel never gave any formal affairs here, but his father did and his father before him. They used to entertain more than a hundred at a time. It was a gay place in those days."

"It might be again," I said. "Such a house as this is meant for entertaining."

"With someone like you in it, perhaps that might come to be," he said irreverently. "Joel, however, would not care for the idea."

"Nor would I, sir, since my position in this household will be that of an employee."

"You're determined not to forget that, aren't you?" Mr. Morgan said, regarding me with interest.

"Quite," I replied stiffly. "And may I ask that you also keep it in mind?"

"I shall try," he replied, completely unper-

turbed. "But you're too young and too lovely to have been placed on this earth to work."

"I am quite immune to flattery of any kind, Mr. Morgan. I am also pleased that we have at last reached our destination."

"I beg your indulgence," he said, and for the first time he seemed truly contrite.

The road fashioned itself into a long, graceful bend that passed through a carefully tended lawn, straight up to the land-front entrance.

THREE/

JOEL TEMPLETON came out immediately, followed by an angular woman in a black dress and long white apron. She stood stiffly erect, and even from this distance I could feel her eyes boring into me.

"That's Ida Davis, the housekeeper," Philip Morgan explained before we pulled up. "She came here with Bess—Joel's wife. She won't like you because you're prettier than Bess ever was and Ida doesn't like anybody who excells Bess in any way."

"I'm sure we'll get along," I said. "Certainly I'll be of no trouble."

"She will," he said prophetically.

As he brought up the horse, Joel Templeton moved down off the porch and reached his hand for mine to help me down. The mere touch of his hand went through me like the shock from a galvanic battery, and I felt a great sense of annoyance with myself for such foolishness.

"Welcome," he said, "to Templeton Hall. I trust you will like it here, Miss Ward."

"Thank you, sir," I said politely. "It is a beautiful spot, and I feel quite fortunate that I shall be able to spend most of the summer in such beautiful country."

"It is I who am fortunate, in having such a competent young lady to assist me," Mr. Templeton replied. "However, I shall endeavor to see that you do have some time for recreation."

"Splendid, Joel," Mr. Morgan exclaimed. "I've already spoken for Miss Ward as a partner in croquet."

"I see you lost no time in getting acquainted," Mr. Templeton said good-naturedly. "But that is why I asked Philip to meet you, after describing you in what I hoped was a manner that would do you justice. I felt he would put you at ease by acquainting you a little with Templeton Hall and its occupants."

Again, I felt myself coloring, but Philip covered my embarrassment by saying that the description had been perfect and that he had had no trouble in seeking me out.

"Mr. Morgan was indeed an excellent traveling companion," I said, regaining my compsure. "Amusing as well as informative."

"Good!" Mr. Templeton exclaimed. "And now I wish to present my housekeeper, Mrs. Davis, who will escort you to your room and answer any

questions you may have. Mrs. Davis, this is Miss Ward, who will be working with me throughout the summer."

"How do you do, Miss?" Mrs. Davis's lips barely moved as she spoke the words, and there was no slightest trace of warmth in the greeting. I was beginning to believe that Mr. Morgan had not been exaggerating when he had stated that she would not like me. I could feel her coldness envelop me with a chill that seemed to shut out the summer sun.

I acknowledged the introduction, then turned to follow her.

"Oh, Miss Ward," Mr. Templeton called to me, "after you have refreshed yourself, I should like you to join me in the downstairs parlor."

"Thank you, sir," I said.

Philip Morgan set my bags on the porch, and Mrs. Davis immediately called for maids. Two of them gathered up my things and, with quick little smiles for my benefit, preceded us into the house and went scampering up the stairs.

"You will find everything to your satisfaction." Mrs. Davis spoke with complete self-assurance. "I am not quite certain how to place you, Miss—as an employee or as a guest."

"Since I shall work for Mr. Templeton, I am, quite obviously, an employee."

"That is how I first considered you, but he did

order me to give you the best guest room and to prepare another room adjoining it as your office. There is a connecting door."

"That was most considerate of Mr. Templeton. I shall find that most convenient," I said.

We went into the reception hall, which was like nothing I had ever seen before. The hall was wide, two stories in height, with an enormous chandelier hanging from the center of the ceiling. The staircase was most novel; there were two stairways at the bottom, each facing one of the entrances, and then, with most graceful winding curves, they merged into a single staircase ending on the second-floor landing.

"Why, what an unusual and beautiful entrance," I exclaimed.

"That may be, Miss, but not to those who have to see to its cleaning."

She led the way up the staircase. Just before it merged, I stopped and turned to look down. The chandelier was level with my head at this point, and I thought it must be a lovely sight at night when all the candles were lit.

"This way, Miss," Mrs. Davis said, so sharply that I jumped.

I followed her the rest of the way. We passed a room with double doors, both of which were closed. This was the north wing, which I assumed was used all the time, while the south wing

was reserved for guests. Looking across the second-floor landing down along the south wing, it appeared gloomy.

Mrs. Davis admitted me to a large bedroom that I could describe only as being stately, My little two-room flat wouldn't have taken up half of this one room. There was a great canopied bed, two large dressers, a chest of quite enormous proportions, and an extremely beautiful, delicately feminine table for writing. Oil lamps, decorative and spotless, were well placed. There was a bathroom with a tub on golden legs and a large washbasin.

The view from the bedroom swept out over the seaward side. I could see the surf roll in, but, with the windows closed, I could not hear it. Beneath the window was a beach of yellow sand that looked very inviting.

"If you'll come with me, Miss, I'll show you where you'll do your work," Mrs. Davis said, interrupting my appreciative study of the beach and the water.

Dutifully, I followed her to a connecting door, which she opened. I entered a smaller room, which had probably been a sitting room, for it boasted a fireplace, but now it was a complete office. There was a long table, a very nice, efficient-looking desk, a brand-new Remington typewriter machine, a pillow-padded wooden chair before it, and another at the desk. The light was excellent for working.

I sat down at the typewriter machine and slipped

a sheet of paper into it. Then I began to type, experimentally. Just the alphabet and some nonsenical sentences I had learned while taking lessons on how to master this monstrous machine.

Mrs. Davis watched me without emotion. "Seems to me," she said, "machines are meant for men to operate. You want anything, there's a bellpull. Do you have any questions, Miss?"

"None at the moment, thank you."

She went out—rather noisily, I thought. But nothing could dismay me now. I was here and it seemed to be a wonderful place. I had everything to work with, amidst the loveliest surroundings I could have imagined.

I returned to the bedroom and hurriedly removed my dress to wash the soot and cinders from my face. I let down my hair and brushed it thoroughly, then arranged it carefully, with a fringe of hair across my brow and a low coil at the nape of my neck.

I opened one of my bags and took from it a dress of white foulard that had a pattern of white and pink marguerites and was trimmed with blue ribbons. It was quite appropriate for the seaside, and I slipped it on. Then, giving myself a final careful appraisal in the bureau mirror, I left the room and walked across the wide gallery to the stairway.

Mrs. Davis stood in the reception hall and guided me to the large parlor. She opened the door, then closed it after I entered. Mr. Templeton

was seated by the fireplace, but he rose quickly as I entered and hastened to me. He took my arm and guided me to a chair near the window that overlooked the water. As I sat down, he seated himself opposite.

I took a moment to regard this huge room, which was cluttered with furniture and knick-knacks. There were two Tiffany lamps; Favrile glass vases were placed about; and there was a beautiful ormolu chandelier. Scattered about the room were several rockers, which were covered and too heavily fringed and tasseled. A very large, round mahogany table was literally covered with vases and lamps, candelabra and books. It was as if whoever decorated this room had had an insatiable desire to buy everything in sight.

Apparently Mr. Templeton noticed my swift inspection of the room and sensed my disapproval, for he said, "We have another room which we use for more formal occasions. It is a drawing room, though it can be converted into a ballroom. However, here is where we gather as a family. Or rather, we did—when there was a family. My wife, Bess, chose many of the furnishings. She could not discipline herself when it came to making purchases for the house—not that I wished to restrict her, but I felt that a little less in a room made for more restful and harmonious surroundings."

I agreed completely with his statement, though

it would have been in bad taste for me to have so stated. Instead, I turned my gaze outdoors to where the lawn sloped down to the sandy shore and thence to the sea itself.

"You have an enchanting view from this room," I said. "But then, I have a similar view from my windows."

He looked pleased. "I'm gratified that you like the rooms. I chose them for you, purposely, for the view."

"It was very kind of you," I said, smiling. "I'm sure I shall not only be extremely comfortable, but will also work well there."

"Good. However, today I shan't bother you with your duties. That can start tomorrow. In the meantime, would you care to take a stroll down to the beach? It might be refreshing after that train ride."

"I shall like it very much, Mr. Templeton. Living in New York, I am used to exercise, and I do enjoy walking."

We left the house and strolled down to the beach, using a direct cinder path. It was a delightful day; the sea was calm, and the sun reddened the sky as the afternoon waned. A few gulls soared above us, inquisitive as to who was breaking into their domain.

My attention was drawn to the beauty all around me; so much so that I didn't notice that

Mr. Templeton had become quiet. I glanced casually up at him and noticed he was quite serious of face. We had almost reached the water's edge, and we both stopped. Mr. Templeton broke the silence, and his voice seemed tormented as he said, "I'm afraid, Miss Ward, I may have made a mistake. I shouldn't have brought you here. It was an impulsively stupid idea on my part."

My breath caught in my throat as panic threatened to overwhelm me. Was I to lose all this before I even began to enjoy it?

"I don't understand, Mr. Templeton," I said with puzzlement. "A few minutes ago, you seemed quite satisfied with the arrangement."

His hand raised and he ran his fingers through his hair in a gesture of unrest. Then he turned swiftly and caught me by the shoulders. His fingers pressed painfully hard against my flesh.

"How do you know I didn't murder my wife? How do you know? Tell me!"

"I—I just don't believe you could have committed such a horrible act," I said, frightened at the intensity in his voice.

"Why? Why should you believe me innocent when everyone else believes me guilty? You don't even know me!"

"Mr. Templeton, please . . . you're hurting me." I tried to struggle free of his grasp, but to no avail.

"You don't even know me, my girl, but you will." His jaw set belligerently. "You will! You'll know me as no other person on this earth ever has. If you stay, you'll know all the Templetons, and I daresay there wasn't a gentleman among them. They were all scalawags."

"Mr. Templeton," I said, putting a firmness in my voice, "will you please release me? You're bruising my arms."

This time he did let go of me, and my hands raised to massage the area he had gripped.

"I didn't mean to hurt you," he said roughly. "I'm sorry."

I nodded. "I'm sure you didn't."

His eyes still burned into mine. "Do you swear you believe me innocent of the death of my wife?"

"I swear it, Mr. Templeton. Also, may I remind you that her body has never been found. She may not even be dead."

He sighed, and the tension seemed to go out of him. "I wasn't completely honest with you in New York the day I spoke with you in the carriage."

It was my turn to feel concern, but I remained silent, knowing he had to tell me what was torturing him.

"I told you I didn't kill my wife. I also told you I did not love her. I did not reveal to you that I hated her, that I could have killed her—I felt

sometimes I almost would." I was touched by the agony in his eyes as he added, "Now do you wish to return to New York City?"

"No, sir. I still believe you innocent of any wrongdoing concerning your wife."

"In that case, I once again ask you to stay."

I forced a smile to my lips. "I consider myself in your employment."

"By God, Miss," he said, and this time his mouth did relax in a smile, "you almost act like a Templeton yourself. My eternal gratitude. I daresay that, between us, we'll rout the devil who's been raising hob out here. We'll expose the guilty with the truth. There's no sharper weapon."

He touched my elbow gently, and we slowly walked back to the house. We were silent, content with each other's company, as old friends will be. That is how I thought of Mr. Templeton at that moment, as an old friend, and I hoped he regarded me in like fashion.

FOUR/

MRS. DAVIS met us in the reception hall to tell us that Mr. and Mrs. Elkin were in the parlor. Mr. Templeton escorted me into the room where a middle-aged couple were seated near the window, obviously awaiting us. It was also obvious that they had been viewing us from the window, for Mrs. Elkin spoke before he was able to introduce me.

"My, my, what a nice-looking typewriter you have acquired, Joel," she said. "You're lovely, my dear, and how amazing to be so attractive and still be useful. How I wish I could do something worthwhile."

"Aunt Greta, this is Miss Lorraine Ward."

"How do you do, my dear. I'm so pleased you're going to be here. You have no idea how happy I am that I will have a member of my own sex to talk to. I'm sure we shall get along beautifully."

"Thank you, Mrs. Elkin," I replied, hoping she

wouldn't realize I was smiling at her loquaciousness.

"And Miss Ward, this is my Uncle Frank," Mr. Templeton said.

He acknowledged the introduction with something that sounded like "Hrrrrumph." He had deigned to rise when Joel introduced me, but he quickly resumed his seat. They were an oddly matched pair. He was stern, lean, and hungry-looking, while she was a buxom, rather vague sort of woman who was inordinately glad to see me.

"Isn't she pretty, dear?" Mrs. Elkin said to her husband.

Again came the grunt while his eyes strayed to a bottle of sherry surrounded by glasses, which sat on a nearby table.

"Do have a seat, Miss Ward," Joel said. "I believe we should toast your arrival with a glass of sherry."

"Frank was most impatient for your return so he could partake of some," Greta informed us.

"He shan't have to wait any longer," Joel said.

I sat down near Mrs. Elkin, who immediately started to tell me how much I would like being here. "It's a charming house, and you must inspect it, for it is filled with interesting things. Even this room has enough to keep one busy inspecting its treasures."

"Yes, it has," I agreed, as I raised my hand for the glass Joel held before me.

"I suggest, a toast to the Templeton Memoirs," he said.

"A splendid idea," Greta exclaimed, raising her glass.

Frank was too impatient to partake in the little ceremony. His was half-gulped down before ours touched our lips.

"Joel," Greta said, "do tell Miss Ward . . ." She leaned toward me. "May I call you Lorraine, dear?"

"Please do," I replied.

"And you must call me Greta," she said. "It will please me."

"In that case, I shall be most happy to."

Her eyes sparkled merrily in gratitude. "I just know we shall become great friends. *Great* friends," she added.

"Thank you, Greta," I replied.

"What was it you wished me to tell Miss Ward?" Joel asked, settling himself on the low windowsill.

"Tell her how this house came to be built. I never tire of hearing the story. It's quite fascinating and I'd tell her myself, except I feel that you, being the master of the house, should do the honors."

Joel's smile was amused. "Thank you, Aunt Greta. Well, Miss Ward, my great-great-grandfather lived here in a shack. He hunted and fished and maintained himself as best he could. Then one

night a schooner was driven up on the rocks. The crew abandoned her and so did the captain. This wonderful, mad, ancient relative of mine swam out of the wreck, hoisted sail all by himself, and waited for more of the gale that had driven the ship ashore. Before morning he had her free and floating. He claimed the ship as salvage, and he got it. That's how we began. From that ship grew a line of merchant and passenger ships that sail every ocean. There ought to be a tall monument built right in the middle of this estate to Seth Templeton for what he did that night."

"That is a fascinating story," I said. "I'm sure I shall be quite enchanted taking down the history of your family."

"I hope so," he replied. "Though it isn't all as exciting as that bit. Of course, there's a lot more detail to what I just told you, but that's the jist of it."

It was pleasant sitting there and conversing. Frank Elkin rose and refilled his glass, then returned to his chair. Greta resumed her chattering, now about New York City and how the noise and dirt of the town upset her so, she loathed going there any more. Her husband never once entered into the conversation but gave his full attention to his sherry.

He was about to fill his glass again when he was distracted by Mrs. Davis, who entered the room to

announce that supper would be served at our convenience. Joel told her we were ready for it.

Greta slipped her arm through mine and led me from the room, across the hall, through a large, formal dining room, and into a smaller room that was obviously the everyday dining room. The linen was lustrous, the silver sparkled, and sterling candelabra glittered in the candlelight.

Joel seated me, then went around the table to seat his aunt, since her husband had taken no pains to do so. He already had his napkin tucked into his vest and was reaching for a spoon to start his consommé before we even had our napkins out of their silver rings. However, neither Joel nor Greta paid the slightest attention; so I gathered this was the usual thing for him.

Greta chattered all through the meal. Philip Morgan didn't even appear, nor did I miss him. Greta's questions were mostly about courts and court procedure and what this or that murderer looked like. I assured her I had not seen any of the people she mentioned. I was highly embarrassed, for it had only been a few days before that Mr. Templeton had been in court charged with murder. This Greta blithely ignored. She was, in my opinion, a busybody who liked to know all the more gruesome details or crimes, and she seemed disappointed that I was quite unable to satisfy her curiosity.

After supper I excused myself and went upstairs to the room that was to be my office. There I arranged everything for my convenience; then I sat down at the typewriter machine and tested it again.

By nine o'clock I was tired. I blew out the lamps in the little office, went into my bedroom, and closed the connecting door. I was pleasantly surprised to see that my bags had been unpacked and my dresses hung in the large closet. They took up but a fraction of the space there. The bureau drawers held the rest of my clothing and a few articles of jewelry. When I opened one of the drawers to take out my nightdress, the pleasantly faint scent of lavender touched my nostrils. Indeed, Mr. Templeton had seen to it that my stay here would be not only comfortable, but pleasurable as well.

I prepared for bed and extinguished all the lamps but the one at my bedside table. There were copies of the latest issues of various magazines on the table, and I picked one up and started to peruse it.

I soon discovered I was too excited or too tired —perhaps a combination of both—to concentrate; so I blew out the last lamp and settled myself for sleep. It didn't come immediately, though as a rule I have little trouble with my rest. Tonight I lay awake thinking of a thousand things, predominated by Joel Templeton and what a man of moods he was.

He could be sullen, and suddenly his frame of

mind could change to one of warm friendliness. He could be strongly aggressive and gently considerate. There were moments when he seemed bitter; yet in view of the public embarrassments he had recently undergone, that was readily understandable. I felt that he could be completely trusted and that he was an extremely fair man in all his dealings. In short, I liked Joel Templeton, and I felt certain I was going to enjoy working for him.

I did wonder, though, about his statement that he shouldn't have brought me here. Why not? Had it been an impulsive move on his part—because I'd brought him a glass of water to ease his coughing spell? Or was there some deeper reason for his having made that statement? For a moment, he had looked frightened—not for himself, but for me. I was puzzled by him; yet I felt I could trust him. He was steady. I could think of no word more suitable to describe him.

Philip Morgan, on the other hand, seemed quite a different sort. Obviously, he liked to flirt, and I felt that had he been given the slightest encouragement . . . I chided myself for making comparisons of the two men.

Philip Morgan had been performing a duty in seeking out my company on the train—though he could have told me. But he was playing a little game, apparently wondering whether I could be trusted to keep Joel's secrets. He had found out

quickly that I could. I wasn't so sure I could trust Philip Morgan.

As for Joel Templeton, he was interested in me only because I could help him with his memoirs. I would do well to remember that in the days to come. Though I was to be treated as a guest in this house, I was merely a typewriter, and I must not allow myself for one moment to forget it.

Gradually I felt myself slipping off into sleep. That was why, at first, I couldn't identify the sounds. But gradually they pierced my consciousness, and I knew they were footsteps—slow, methodical footsteps. And they seemed to be right here in this room.

My eyes blinked open, and I sat up with a start. "Who is it?" I asked.

Instantly, the steps ceased and all was quiet, except the beating of my heart, which I felt could be heard in the corridor. I reached out and, with trembling fingers, found the matches. I struck one and lit the lamp. I sought out every corner of the room, but I could see no one. I arose, picking up the lamp, and went to investigate the office, then the closets, and finally the bathroom, but my search revealed not a sign of anyone.

I wondered if I could have dreamed it. Puzzled, I closed my office door and returned to bed, shrugging off the fear I'd felt upon awakening. I extinguished the lamp and settled down in an attempt to get to sleep.

However, I had no more than stretched out in an attempt to relax, then the footsteps resumed in the exact spot where they'd stopped when I'd called out. It was as if someone had come to an abrupt halt at the sound of my voice and stood transfixed until I was back in my bed.

Again, the steps sounded as if they were in the same room with me. Yet I knew that to be impossible. However, as I lay there, they began to fade and finally drifted off until all was silence. However, they had lasted long enough to frighten me into a state of complete wakefulness.

With a sigh, I sat up and lit the lamp once again. Then I propped the pillow up and picked up a magazine. I read until my eyes became so leaden that I could no longer see the print on the page.

Once again I extinguished the lamp and settled down for sleep. This time I wasn't disturbed, and I slept the night through.

FIVE/

I AWOKE, completely refreshed, with the morning sunlight streaming through my windows, filling me with a sense of well-being. I slipped out of bed, eager for the new day when I would begin my work.

I dressed carefully, then took a brief peek into the office to make certain all was as I had left it the night before. It was, and I smiled, pleased, as I saw the covered typewriter machine on which I could write the memoirs of the fabulous Templetons.

I closed the door, left the bedroom, and went downstairs to the small dining room, where breakfast awaited me. I was surprised to see Philip Morgan there, already at the table. He rose promptly.

"Good morning, Miss Ward," he said affably. "I hope you slept well."

"I did indeed, Mr. Morgan," I replied briskly. "I am rather surprised to see you. I was of the

opinion that you had gone back to New York."

"Because I didn't appear for supper last evening? I borrowed a horse and rode over to see Celeste Bond, a neighbor. I thought she might appreciate my coming, and she did, for she proved it by asking me a hundred questions about you."

"Why me? We've never met."

"You will, I'm sure. Celeste worries when any attractive girl meets Joel. She wished to know all about you."

"I do hope you gave her a favorable report," I said gaily.

"She didn't think so, for I told her you were most attractive. Celeste is already jealous. Beware of jealous females."

"I'm sure Miss Bond has little to worry about," I said. "Have you seen Mr. Templeton this morning?"

"He rises soon after dawn. By this time he has had a swim, has gone down to inspect his boat, has had breakfast, and is at work in his library."

"Then I shan't waste any more time talking," I said, helping myself to feathery scrambled eggs and crisp bacon.

Philip poured me a cup of coffee. "I seem destined not to enjoy your company. I don't know whether you plan it or Joel does."

"Neither, Mr. Morgan," I replied, munching on a piece of toast. "You like to play; I like to work —and so, I believe, does Mr. Templeton."

"I fear you don't have a very high opinion of me," he said, pretending concern.

"I like you, Mr. Morgan, but I don't take anything you say very seriously. Nor do you intend that I should."

He laughed, then rested his arms on the table and leaned forward.

"I'll tell you a secret, Miss Ward—Lorraine . . ."

I looked surprised at his use of my first name, though why I should have, I don't know, for it was typical of him.

"You aren't offended?" he asked.

"Not a bit."

"Then I hope you'll call me Philip," he went on boldly, "because I have a *very* high opinion of you. I like you tremendously."

I took a sip of coffee and touched my napkin to my lips. "I must go to Mr. Templeton. He is undoubtedly ready to begin our day."

Philip rose as I did. "I know better than to ask you to allow me to escort you there. So I'll just say that I hope to see you at dinner so you can tell me all the secrets of the Templetons."

"I'll tell you nothing, Mr. Morgan," I said, smiling. "Good morning."

I had no idea where the library was, but I had no need for concern, for Mrs. Davis met me in the reception hall. After first greeting her, I asked for directions. She didn't respond to my greeting, but

with the barest movement of her lips said, "Follow me, Miss."

I did, and we passed through the drawing room, which, in contrast to the family room, was furnished in exquisite taste. Deep-piled Oriental rugs covered the vast floor. It was an enormous room with high ceilings and many mirrors, and it was furnished in dainty white-finished French furniture, the settees and chairs glistening with damask. There were several French doors opening onto the land front, and I could well imagine what an enchanting room it could be turned into for a ball.

However, I had to quicken my steps to keep up with the long strides of Mrs. Davis. We reached the end of the room, and she paused before a door and knocked rather heavily. Too heavily, for my tastes. Mr. Templeton called permission to enter. Mrs. Davis stepped back and eyed me insolently as I entered. I closed the door behind me and moved across the room.

Joel rose and moved from behind his desk. His greeting was friendly, but businesslike, which was as I wished it. I could see that he had already been out, for across the back of a chair was thrown a lightweight leather jacket. His shirt was open at the neck in casual fashion.

There was a straight-backed chair beside the desk, and I sat down in it, propped my notepad on my lap, and held a pencil poised to take down his notes.

He smiled. "It won't be that easy, Miss Ward. I must first assemble my thoughts about my family and I can best do that aloud. I trust you slept well."

"I did, sir—except that shortly after I retired, I heard footsteps, and some trick of sound made it appear they were in my room. However, when I investigated, there was no one about."

"That's interesting," he said, frowning. "I hope it didn't frighten you.'

"It did, at first," I admitted. "Also, after I got back into bed, the step's resumed, then faded away. I can't imagine where they were coming from. Of course, I'm not familiar with the house, but the gallery is well carpeted, as are the stairways and reception hall."

"And so are your rooms."

"That is true, and that made it the more puzzling."

"Are you troubled about it?" he asked with concern.

"I see no reason to be," I replied, smiling now in remembrance of the fright.

"We've never had prowlers around here," he informed me. "It must have been someone in the house, and their footsteps must have carried in the stillness of the night."

"That's undoubtedly it," I said, pleased at his reasoning, knowing there was no further need for fear.

"Now that you are reassured, we shall get on with the business at hand. As you know, my wife is missing and presumed dead—murdered. Three months ago, she went upstairs to her room, and she was never seen again. She had retired that night, but apparently something awakened her and, of a certainty, she left the house, taking nothing with her save a dressing robe and the jewelry she happened to be wearing—a bracelet, two rings, and a charm on a gold chain."

My brow furrowed thoughtfully. He noticed and said, "What is it?"

"I was just thinking that I doubt very much that Mrs. Templeton went to bed that night, for no woman wears a bracelet and a charm to bed."

"A very interesting observation, one I didn't think of and apparently the police didn't either. Well, let me go on. I had intended to begin at the beginning of the family, as far as my knowledge and old documents can go, but it would take too long. I want to examine everything that happened in the last five years—since my father died. Somewhere during those years lies the motive for my wife's disappearance or murder. Let us therefore presume first that the motive is the usual one—greed. If I had been convicted of killing Bess, I should likely have been executed. Now who would gain if that happened? That depends upon the contents of my will. I'll not divulge that yet, though Uncle Frank and Aunt Greta would not

have to seek admittance to a poor farm, let me assure you."

"I could hardly see that any motive would apply to such fine people," I said.

"Look here, my girl, don't be misled by that pair. They're both as shrewd as an Arab seacoast trader. Greta sounds like a woman without a brain in her head, but she's more wily than her husband. I don't trust either one, but I'm not inclined to put them out of this house. As I said, it would not be safe to disregard them. Mrs. Davis, the housekeeper, hates me intensely."

"But why does she work for you under those conditions, Mr. Templeton? And why do you keep her on?"

"In answer to your first question, she feels she has a mission here. She worked for Bess before we were married eight years ago. Bess brought her here and soon compelled me to retire the woman who had taken care of my family for many years. Oh yes, Bess was ruthless. Mrs. Davis is completely convinced that I killed Bess, and I believe she fully expects me to murder her in her sleep some night, too. Yet she will stay because she wishes to see me get my comeuppance. Beware of Mrs. Davis, for she will construe any act of mine—or yours, if you favor me—in any way that suits her fancy."

"I'm already aware of her enmity toward me," I said.

"In answer to your second question, I'm letting her stay on because I may learn something through her. If it were not for that, I'd have sent her packing long ago. Now there's also Captain Walt. I presume Philip told you of him."

"Yes—he said he was a disgruntled man."

"Walt wrecked one of our ships. That was in my father's time. My father didn't tolerate failure, so he beached him. Had his papers taken away, but he offered him a job here for the rest of his life, and Walt took it. In bad grace, and he's never forgiven. The death of my father didn't make any difference. Walt just transferred his hatred to me."

"But if he dislikes you that much, why does he remain?" I asked. "And again, why do you allow him to?"

"Walt says he can't hate properly unless he sees the man he hates now and then. Frankly," he said, smiling, "I think he's harmless. Then we have Philip. In my opinion, he's a fool. I may be wrong. He may be a very wise man playing the part of a fool. His father is my partner. I inherited him, for he was my father's partner. Earl Morgan must be related to Morgan the pirate, for he acts exactly as if he were Morgan himself. So you see what a fine collection of people I have gathered about me?"

"And do you think one of them would murder your wife to avenge some wrong you may have committed—or they thought you did?"

"No," he responded promptly. "I'll tell you why. If anyone wanted revenge against me, the best way to get it would be to let Bess go on living, for she made my life ghastly. But she could have been killed in the hope I'd be blamed for it. It was no secret that our marriage was not a happy one. I like to believe I did everything in my power to make it so, for my feeling for Bess when I married her was one of pity rather than love. I thought her to be a delicate, helpless creature who needed me to lean on. But she proved to be a ruthless, scheming, nagging woman who never gave me a moment's peace. I used to take my boat out so I could get away from her. Since she wouldn't set foot on it, the boat was the only place I could go to escape her vitriolic tongue. She hated the water —I believe feared is an even better word."

He paused, and I lowered my eyes from his gaze, lest he see the sympathy I felt for him.

He misunderstood and said, "I have shocked you. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have been so outspoken."

"No!" I exclaimed. "It's just that I had no idea you were so—so unhappy."

"Which, of course, gives me a strong motive for doing away with her. But I swear to you, I did not."

"I believe you, Mr. Templeton."

"Then let's get on with it. As I said, we'll begin

my memoirs somewhere near the present date—say a few years back—and go on from there. Once that's complete, we'll then go far back into the past—back to the beginning. However, I believe the death of my father would be the proper place, for our present purposes."

I poised my pencil and said, "I'm ready, sir."

For two hours he leaned back and talked, not too fast, for he was thinking back and trying to remember the facts accurately. Now and then he referred to a book that seemed to be some sort of diary which he told me he kept locked in a large and very secure safe. Most of the details concerned the conversion of their ships from sail to stream and of how Earl Morgan had argued against it, delayed the work, and even threatened to take matters into court.

What Joel was trying to do was to show that Earl Morgan had reason to wish him ill. Certainly he and his son Philip would profit highly if Joel died, because they would then be authorized by law to buy out the steamship line at a price they would set, though a court would pass on it finally. A little influence in the proper places, Joel's story indicated, meant that the Morgans could own a multimillion-dollar business for a small sum.

"Even now," Joel went on dictating, "Earl Morgan is doing his best to slow down our conversion to steam because if he has to buy out a company

devoted, for the most part, to sails, he will get it very much cheaper. I have to fight for each ship into which I install stacks and a boiler."

There was a great deal more, some of it in figures, and my pencil flew across the pages. I began to realize that this was not going to be a simple and easy job. I would earn my pay.

He did stop abruptly, however, in midafternoon. We hadn't stopped for dinner, though he'd had a maid bring me in a cucumber sandwich and a glass of cool milk. He himself seemed tireless and not in the least in need of food.

He replaced his ledgers and notes in the safe, which I now saw was concealed behind a picture. He spun the dial, locking it. When he turned around to face me, he was smiling. "If you got all that, you're very good, Miss Ward."

"I'm sure I got every word," I said. "I shall begin transcribing at once."

"No—not today. Take your books and put them in your desk. Be sure to lock the drawer and keep the key in your possession. Then take the rest of the day off, and tomorrow you may begin your work on the typewriting machine. One day I'll dictate; the next day you will typewrite your notes. Is that method satisfactory?"

"Quite satisfactory," I said.

"Take a walk now. Amuse yourself. You might be interested in my sloop. It's tied up at the dock. You'll see it if you go down to the beach and walk

around the spit. Go aboard; examine her. She's a fine ship. I have quite a fancy for her."

"Thank you, Mr. Templeton. I have never set foot on a sloop. In fact, except for a rowboat in Central Park, I've never been on the water."

"You poor landlubber," he laughed. "We shall remedy that as soon as possible. Be off with you now."

I carried all my notebooks upstairs to the little office and, as Joel had instructed me to do, I locked them in the top drawer of my desk. Then I spent a little time sharpening the pencils I'd worn down that day and preparing some fresh books for the next time he dictated. I also made ready the paper I would use the next morning, and I made certain the keys of the typewriting machine were clean, even though it had just come from the factory.

This done, I put on walking shoes and drew a yellow scarf about my head, tying it under my chin. I went downstairs, using the beach-front entrance, and made my way across the estate toward the beach.

I passed close by the little cabin where Captain Walt lived, but he wasn't around and I decided against even crossing the front yard, which was surrounded by a low white wooden fence and was colorfully alive with all manner of flowers.

As I neared the beach, I thought it strange that such an isolated spot as this could be so close to a great city. Not sixty miles away was the crowded

and bustling metropolis; yet I felt no longing for it. To my mind, this was the most enchanting spot on earth, and I wished mightily I need never have to leave it.

I took off my shoes, and, after a hasty glance about to be sure I was unobserved, I also removed my stockings. I carried these in my hand and walked barefoot on the sand, even daring to permit the surf to splash softly against my ankles while I held my dress out of harm's way.

I already felt adjusted to my new surroundings, and while I would have found greater enjoyment if the circumstances of my being here were not beclouded by the suspicion of murder, I felt that Mr. Templeton would make things as pleasant for me as he could. As for the other members of the household, I hoped that my relations with them could be friendly. I continued my walk along the beach until it curved out, and after I passed this turn, I saw the sloop.

The ship stood straight, with a high mast, and everything about it glistened in the sunlight. It was fashioned of some sort of wood that had been varnished and revarnished and then holystoned down until it shone like a priceless piece of furniture in a Fifth Avenue mansion. I went out onto the pier and stepped onto the deck. The ship seemed so big—large enough to sail around the world, I thought. And well able to do it, too. I wondered what was below decks, but I hadn't

been granted permission to inspect everything, only to go aboard. I put my stockings and shoes back on and stood behind the wheel, letting my hands caress it, and felt a thrill as I thought of sailing aboard it.

Then curiosity got the better of me, and I did go below. I made my way down the companionway to a short corridor off which were two cabins and a gallery. Everything was spotlessly clean.

Daringly, I stepped into one of the cabins. A closet door was ajar. Still curious, I moved so that I could peer inside and view its contents. I wondered what kind of apparel Mr. Templeton wore when he sailed his sloop, so I was ill-prepared for what I viewed in the darkened interior.

There were several colorful dresses within. I opened the door wider as if to assure myself that my eyes didn't deceive me. Then embarrassed color flooded my face as I realized that I was prying. It didn't lessen my shock, but it served to steady me, and I rebuked myself mentally for jumping to conclusions. Those dresses could belong to nobody but Mrs. Templeton. Thus having reassured myself, I turned away from the closet and was about to go on deck again to return to the house when I heard an odd sound like that of a horse being ridden along the dock. Then there was a thud as I felt someone jump aboard, and a woman's voice called out.

I climbed the stairs and as my head and shoul-

ders rose above deck, a young lady of about twenty-one or -two regarded me with open hostility. She was utterly beautiful, with fair features and blond hair, and she was wearing a most attractive riding costume. She carried herself well and had self-assurance and poise that made it obvious she was the product of some excellent finishing school.

Her eyes were cool, almost hostile, as she regarded me.

I returned her glance and said, "Hello. I'm Lorraine Ward, Mr. Templeton's secretary."

SIX/

SHE WALKED over to the rail and rested one hand on it. Her eyes flicked over my person in a manner I resented; yet I was careful to hide my displeasure.

"Yes," she said; "Philip was right. You're extremely attractive. I'm Celeste Bond."

"How do you do, Miss Bond," I replied courteously. "I'm pleased to make your acquaintance."

"Are you indeed?" she said, her smile not pleasant. "Does Joel know you're aboard? He makes quite a fuss if anyone boards his boat without his knowing it."

"Mr. Templeton suggested I inspect the ship, Miss Bond. Did he give you permission to board it?"

Her head tilted defiantly. Obviously, I hadn't made a friend in Miss Bond. She was taller than I, so the advantage was hers as she looked down at me, her glance hostile. Yet I did not turn from her

disdainful gaze, and she gave the barest perceptible shrug.

"Excuse me, please," she said.

She walked briskly to the hatch and disappeared down the companionway. I was tempted to go ashore to escape her rudeness, but I decided to remain where I was. Were I to flee from her, at our next meeting—should there be one—she might be tempted to harass me further with words.

She spent only a few moments below, and when she reappeared, she was carrying a pink gown over her arm.

Her smile was falsely sweet as she said, "This is what I came for, Miss Ward. I'm sure we shall meet again. In the meantime, you may tell Joel . . . Oh, never mind, I forgot. You were hired merely as an assistant to help with his memoirs. Not as a regular secretary. My message is nothing that can't wait until I see him again."

She stepped off the craft, untied her horse from a post, mounted, still holding on to the beautiful gown, and rode away without a backward look. I could sense her feeling of triumph. It had been her idea to put me in my place, and she had done it expertly. The significance of her going below for one of her dresses had not been lost on me.

How naïve of me to think that the frocks I had seen in the closet belonged to Joel's wife, when he himself had told me that she despised the water,

that it had been the only place where he could escape her constant nagging. Perhaps, in view of what I had just witnessed, Mrs. Templeton had had reason to nag. Perhaps she was heartsick and in despair because of an infatuation that had been going on before her very eyes. Despite Judge Gaylord's warning to beware of Mr. Templeton, and despite Joel Templeton's having told me the Templeton men were an unruly lot, I felt a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach.

Yet I couldn't blame him for being in love with Miss Bond. She was breathtakingly beautiful, with the deepest and most expressive brown eyes I had ever seen. Also, she was undoubtedly used to the same way of life as he. It was apparent she was highly educated, and she was no doubt wealthy and well-traveled.

She was also cruel. Her reason for going below for the dress had been to show me it was she Mr. Templeton was interested in and not I. And yet how foolish it was of her, for, so far as I was concerned, there could very well still be a Mrs. Templeton. However, it was apparent she had no thought of that. Could she be so certain Mrs. Templeton was dead? Could she *know?* I wondered if Joel had ever realized that if Mrs. Templeton had been murdered, it might not necessarily have been a member of Templeton Hall who had committed the crime. My face flamed at the workings of my

mind. I was being as cruel in my way as Miss Bond had been.

I forced such thoughts from my mind and took leave of the ship, for it no longer held any interest for me. I stepped onto the dock and walked lazily along it. A gull swooped down, eager for a tidbit; then, when none was forthcoming, screamed angrily and flew off.

I found the path leading back to the house and started along it. There was a gradual climb, hardly noticeable until one turned to look back and saw that the ocean was well below. As I neared the top of the rise, I came upon a grove of pines that had been planted to encircle the ocean front of the house. I walked through it, enjoying the tangy scent and the cool shadows, slipping on the needles as I continued my climb, yet enjoying the sound of them as they crunched beneath my feet.

I made my way through the trees, feeling a strange chill pervade me, as if evil dwelt not in the grove, but in the house I was returning to. When I finally stepped into the opening and the sunshine flooded me, I still had no inclination to return to the house.

As I viewed it, standing there, it seemed a dreary, forbidding sort of place. I was looking at it from the ocean front, which seemed to make a great deal of difference. Templeton Hall was like a two-sided card, bright on one side, dull on the

other. The land side seemed to give promise of much pleasantness within; the ocean side, of brooding silences and fears.

It was the oddest impression I'd ever had of a house. It looked completely sinister from where I stood, its bleakness even in the summertime bringing to mind the mysterious footsteps I'd heard during the night. Where had they come from? Why had they seemed so close to me although no one had been visible?

When I'd stepped into the opening, I found myself on a path that skirted the Hall, and I decided to explore it. It left the house, and though it moved along the ocean side, there was thick forest growth on the land side. Suddenly I came again in sight of a cottage, and I was pleased to see it, for it dispelled the melancholy thoughts that seemed to possess me.

I knew this was Captain Hoyt's cottage, for the gentleman sitting outside wore a blue uniform coat with brass buttons and a ship's officer's cap. He watched me approach and stopped his whittling. When I slowed, he paid me no heed, though I knew he was aware of my presence, for he had raised his eyes from his work to give me the merest glance. I again felt rebuffed, but as before, I would not turn and run.

"How do you do, Captain Hoyt?" I said. "I'm

Miss Ward, and I've been hired by Mr. Templeton to assist him during the summer weeks."

"Ain't got nuthin' to do with me," he said gruffly.

I was too stunned at his rudeness to reply and turned to retrace my steps. His rasping voice, perhaps the result of having given commands for years, set my nerves on edge.

"That what you come by to tell me?" he called out.

I turned. "No, Captain. I came by to meet you. Obviously, it was a mistake."

"Spunky, ain't you? You want my advice, young lady? Go away from here. Now . . . tonight. This ain't a fit place for the likes of you. The innocent suffer with the guilty here, and you ain't no exception. Get out—before you look like this!"

He held up the object he'd been whittling; it was the startling and horrible outline of a skull—a human skull, so intricately done that every detail was shown. Eye sockets were deep; teeth were carved perfectly; the jaws seemed able to move.

He gave a cackling laugh and tossed the ugly thing at me. It landed at my feet, and as I looked down at it, horrified, it seemed to mock me. I walked away from him as fast as I could, followed by his sardonic laughter. Truly Templeton Hall housed a group of weird, unpredictable people.

Perhaps this old saltwater captain was right. Perhaps I ought to leave before something happened to me.

I entered the house through the ocean-front side and went up that staircase until it joined the other. There I paused and stood at the landing, where I admired the chandelier. Its exquisite beauty served to help me forget the unpleasantness I'd undergone. Waning sunlight, filtering through windows and curtains, reflected against the hundreds of prisms, and gold, silver, and pink ribbons of light shot forth to decorate the ceiling and the walls. It was shimmering loveliness, the like of which I had never seen before. It made me think that something as lovely as this could not exist in a house of evil. I felt a little better as I continued on to my room.

The few moments of pause on the landing had served to relax me. My little outing had not been a success, although I had got out of the house. I made up my mind that when next I wandered about the estate, I would be careful to avoid Captain Hoyt. Certainly he had no desire to make my acquaintance. As for Miss Bond, she had made her dislike for me immediately apparent.

I refused to dwell on the two brief encounters I'd had and went into the room designated as my office, to study some of my notes and get every-

thing in readiness for my typing the following morning.

I sat down behind my little desk, took the key from my pocket and unlocked the drawers. Immediately I realized that someone had examined them, and I felt certain that my notes had been gone through. The pads had been moved, and papers I had arranged in orderly fashion had been placed differently. There wasn't the slightest doubt in my mind that someone was highly curious about my notes.

I wondered if anyone in this house could read Pittman. I doubted it, for it was not the commonest shorthand. Then, too, there was no one in this household who looked as if he or she had any reason to have been trained in the use of shorthand. I did plan to take certain precautions next time to make sure whether the desk had been examined in my absence. Once I was certain it had, I would tell Mr. Templeton.

This was what he was hoping for. If someone had this strong a desire to know what Mr. Templeton was dictating, then he or she must have some knowledge of what had happened to Mrs. Templeton. Mr. Templeton's theory was apparently right, and it was working, but who could have been in here?

I decided to speak to Mr. Templeton in private after supper to inform him of my discovery, for I

felt the matter to be one of extreme urgency. I paced the floor of my small office, thinking about the people in this house, the two individuals I had met this afternoon, and, most of all, my employer, Joel Templeton.

Again I thought of what a strange man he was. A wealthy man, important in the field of commerce. A kindly man, yet also brusque and, I imagined, ruthless when need be. In short, he was an utterly fascinating man. I had to admit it. I had sensed it the moment I first set eyes on him. I had felt solicitude when he suffered the coughing spell —so much so I had hastened to bring him a glass of water.

What was happening to me, I asked myself, that I should so disturb myself about him and his troubles? I had been hired merely to take down the memoirs of his family as he dictated them to me. So far as he was concerned, I was there for that reason and no other. But so far as I was concerned . . .

I moved quickly into the bedroom and stood before the mirror, looking directly at my reflection. Why had I accepted this position? Was it because of the wage he had offered to pay me? Was it because it would enable me to get away from the stifling heat of the city? Or was it because my interest in Mr. Templeton went beyond interest in a gentleman who sought to hire a secretary? My

eyes, regarded myself in the mirror, lowered, and I felt my heartbeat quicken. What a foolish, silly young woman I was! And what a presumptuous one! I deserved the rebuffs I'd received this afternoon, even though I had done nothing to warrant them. Perhaps they would bring me to my senses.

Captain Hoyt had advised me, in his rude way, to leave Templeton Hall. Celeste Bond had warned me, in so many words, that Joel Templeton was her property. Joel . . . I let the name drift around in my mind, and, daringly, I said it aloud. Not once, but two or three times, and very softly.

Could I be so rash, I asked myself, as to be falling in love with a man who lived under the cloud of suspicion of having murdered his wife? True, he he hadn't been found guilty of the crime; true, his wife's body hadn't been discovered; yet he had himself admitted he didn't love her, that she was a constant nag, and that he had felt like murdering her.

But, I reminded myself, he had sworn to his innocence. I smiled wanly. Would any murderer swear to his guilt? my reflection seemed to ask of me.

I turned quickly away from the mirror, tired of the questions I asked myself. I told myself sternly that I meant nothing to Mr. Templeton and that if I were to be so inane as to fall in love with him or to imagine that I were doing so, I should pack my

possessions at once and leave Templeton Hall. The thought of leaving filled me with such dismay that I assured myself I would entertain no more such foolish thoughts. I would carry out my duties and remain to myself, though not to the point of being unsociable.

As for Captain Hoyt's warning that I leave Templeton Hall, I shrugged it off as the ravings of an embittered old man. As for Miss Bond, I would not concern myself further with her rude behavior. Perhaps, when she realized I had no romantic notions regarding Mr. Templeton, she would treat me with civility. I had great reservations regarding that, though.

Supper was rather a dull affair with Frank Elkin as silent as ever and Greta as verbose. From what she said, I gathered she was ever espousing some cause or other and was now engaged in writing innumerable letters to newspapers concerning the atrocious conditions reputed to prevail on passenger ships of foreign registry. At least she was favoring American ships, of which her nephew owned a goodly number. Though how Greta knew what conditions were on any sort of ship was quite beyond me.

Philip made no appearance, though a place had been set for him. Mr. Templeton was in a thoughtful mood and seemed unaware of Greta's constant monologue throughout the meal.

Immediately after supper Greta excused herself to write another letter. Frank remained at the table, and Mrs. Davis brought a glass of Brandy for him to drink with his coffee. Mr. Templeton rose to unseat me, and then asked me to join him in the library.

SEVEN/

AGAIN he sought my permission to smoke, and I cheerfully gave it, sitting back to watch as he lit the cheroot.

"Tell me, Miss Ward, did you have an enjoyable afternoon?" he asked as he settled himself in a chair opposite me.

"It was interesting," I replied, my smile enigmatic.

"Templeton Hall is a place of many adventures for the unwary. I take it you have experienced some."

"I have," I replied. "First, I met Miss Bond while I was inspecting your boat. She came aboard and introduced herself. Oh yes, she had to go below for an item she said she had forgotten. When I left the boat, I took a stroll about the estate and came upon Captain Hoyt's cottage. He was sitting in front, whittling."

"He's quite good at it," Mr. Templeton said. "Did he present you with what he whittled?"

"Yes, but I didn't choose to accept it."

"What was it?"

"A skull," I replied. I didn't state that he had thrown it at my feet.

Mr. Templeton sobered. "It was boorish of him, but he's that type of person. Try not to let it bother you."

"It doesn't," I assured my employer. "Captain Hoyt also suggested I get away from here."

"Do you wish to go?" Mr. Templeton regarded me through the smoke haze of his cheroot.

"No, sir. Not unless you order me to leave."

"Be assured, I shan't do that. As for Captain Hoyt, ignore him. He's happiest when he's alone. When anyone comes near him, he becomes mean and ornery. As for Miss Bond, I hope her outspokenness didn't frighten you."

"It did at first," I admitted. "But I shan't let it disturb me."

"Good girl," he said with a grin.

"Mr. Templeton, I have something of grim importance to speak to you about."

He set his cheroot down in an ashtray and leaned forward, placing his elbows on his knees. "Of course, Miss Ward. What is it?"

"You did say that one reason you were going to set down your memoirs was that someone might try to discover what you were writing. I believe you were right. When I returned to my room this afternoon, I opened my locked desk, and it ap-

peared to me that the contents of the drawers had been tampered with."

"Are you certain?" he asked with heightened interest.

"Quite. My papers and notepads were not in the same arrangement as I had placed them."

His smile was thoughtful. "So the bait is attractive after all. Had you transcribed any of the notes?"

"No, sir . . . you said I was to do that every other day."

"I did," he agreed. "Thank you for telling me about it. Should there be any further attempts at searching your desk, I'll want to know about it. And whenever you have anything typed, bring it to me directly and I'll put it in my safe. We'll circumvent these curious people and, in the end, force them to reveal themselves to us."

"I do hope so, Mr. Templeton," I said, rising.

He got up and walked with me as far as the door. "Thank you, Miss Ward, for being so alert. And now, good night."

"Good night, Mr. Templeton," I replied, and continued on my way.

I was just about to go upstairs when Philip entered. "Why, Lorraine," he exclaimed. "How pleasant to see you. Do come into the parlor with me while I sip a brandy."

"I think not, Philip," I said.

My hand rested on the stair rail, but he boldly

reached out, grasped it, and drew me into the parlor. He bowed and waved an arm grandly toward a chair. Knowing it would be useless to argue, I sat down. He poured himself a brandy and sat opposite me, regarding me with interest.

"Did you have an interesting day?" he asked.

"Interesting," I replied, "though not altogether pleasant."

He smiled. "You mean Celeste."

"And Captain Hoyt."

"Don't let him frighten you. The one to watch out for is Celeste."

"In Heaven's name, why?"

He smiled. "I had supper with her this evening. She lives alone with an elderly father who is quite uncommunicative, and it makes life lonely for her."

"I can well imagine it does." I thought of Joel's sloop and the closet full of dresses. It seemed to me that Celeste would not be the type of person to allow herself to become lonely.

He regarded me with amusement. "You sound as if you don't care about her."

"I would say it was the other way around."

He nodded knowingly. "Yes, she regards you as a rival for Joel's affections."

"How perfectly ridiculous," I said, hoping my face registered the proper disapproval.

"Is it?"

"It is, and if you brought me in here to discuss such a topic, I beg of you to excuse me."

"Please, don't go," he exclaimed. "I didn't mean to sound bold. It's merely that I feel you should be warned about Celeste. She's ruthless. As ruthless as Joel. At one time she and Joel were to be married. Instead, he married Bess. No one knows why. Certainly the marriage was anything but successful."

"Please, Philip, this does not concern me." I wanted mightily to leave this room, for I found that discussing Joel Templeton was quite difficult. Also, I felt it was not the thing to do.

"Did I detect a slight quaver in your voice?" he asked.

"If so, it is caused by my indignation that you and Miss Bond saw fit to discuss me in such a manner."

He regarded the brandy snifter that he held between both his hands warming it. "I had only words of high praise for you, Lorraine. The fact is, I find you extremely appealing. Please don't take offense. I mean it only in a complimentary fashion. However, I fear that what I said about you only served to fan the flames of jealousy Celeste feels for you."

"I don't understand how Miss Bond can be so presumptuous as to regard Mr. Templeton as anything more than a friend. No one knows for certain that Mrs. Templeton is deceased."

"Did Joel say that?" he asked quickly.

"It is my own thought, sir."

"Nevertheless, Celeste is going to fight for Joel this time, I assure you."

"I assure you, Philip, that is of no interest to me. However, I daresay Miss Bond has little or no cause to worry about Mr. Templeton. I believe they see one another whenever they wish."

"You have reason for such an opinion?"

It was my turn to smile. "If I have, I shall keep it to myself."

Philip returned the smile and rolled the brandy glass between his palms. "Let us turn the conversation to your work. What did your employer dictate to you today? I mean, how is the family history going?"

"Splendidly," I said. "It is most interesting. And now, Philip, if you will excuse me, I would like to go to my room. I am quite fatigued."

"Of course, Lorraine," he said, setting the glass down and rising. "I will escort you to the stairs."

"Please don't," I replied.

He moved over and stood, looking down at me. "Yes, you are quite an appealing young lady. Much more so than Celeste. I noticed it that day on the train. Apparently, Joel noticed it in the courtroom."

"Please, Philip," I pleaded, "don't talk this way."

"I mean no offense," he said, his voice soft. "It

may be that I'm jealous of Joel. He has the opportunity of being with you a great part of the day. I can only steal moments with you." His hands reached out to grasp my shoulders, but I raised mine to ward him off.

"Please, Philip," I said, stepping back from his reach. "I am employed here as a secretary and I wish to conduct myself so that my behavior can leave no cause for criticism."

His hands dropped to his sides. "Very well, Lorraine. I see I must be patient, and I shall be; but remember—I more than like you."

"Good night, Philip," I said, and fled the room.

As I reached the door, I almost collided with Mr. Templeton. I wondered how much he had heard. All, apparently, for his eyes regarded me coldly, and I flinched from his gaze.

I ran up the stairs, seeking the sanctuary of my room. I closed the door behind me and leaned against it, and I could feel my body break out in prespiration, not because of my running, but because of my embarrassment. However, the embarrassment was quickly replaced with a feeling of resentment toward Mr. Templeton, for I had conducted myself in a ladylike fashion, and he'd had no right to look at me with such disapproval.

I wiped perspiration from my brow with my fingers, then went into the bathroom, soaked a cloth in water, and placed it against my face. Its coolness served to calm me, and as I regained my

equilibrium, my thoughts returned to my desk. I must do something so that I could ascertain with certainty that it was being tampered with in my absence.

I went to my sewing kit and took out a spool of thread, bringing it into the office. I sat down behind my desk, placed a note pad close to the edge, ran one end of the thread under it, ran the other end down below the drawer, and tried to find some way to attach it. There being none, I took a pin from my small sewing kit and drove that into the underside of the desk. I then unlocked the drawer and pulled it open carefully.

The thread beneath the notebook slipped out easily, but the end tied to the pin was secure. The thread merely fell down and hung below the desk, well out of sight. It was impossible to feel any resistance as the drawer opened, for the thread pulled easily from beneath the lightweight note pad.

My trap was now prepared. No one could open that drawer without revealing the fact to me. Tomorrow, when I was finished working, I would set the thread in place.

I slept well that night, undisturbed by anyone moving about. The next day I worked hard typewriting the notes I had made. When I was finished, I placed them in a folder and went down to the library, which Mr. Templeton used as an office. Mrs. Davis informed me he was out; so I didn't

leave the typed material. I kept it with me, for I was resolved that it not be out of my sight until I turned it over to him.

I'd had Mrs. Davis bring my dinner on a tray, and I spent the afternoon reading magazines. I would have liked a walk along the beach before supper, but not while I carried the folder of copy.

I remained in my rooms, reading for a while, then pacing restlessly, for I was unaccustomed to this lack of exercise. From time to time I gazed out the window, hoping for a sign of Mr. Templeton. About a half hour before supper, I saw him galloping along the beach on horseback and then turning his horse toward the estate. Relieved, I waited until I was certain he'd had time to change and go downstairs. I'd forgotten my anger of the night before, though I must confess I felt a trace of resentment when I viewed him from the window, for I sensed he had spent his time with Celeste. She rode a horse as beautifully as he, and he had apparently sought out her company. Again, I chided myself for my foolishness, picked up the folder containing what I had typed, and went downstairs.

"Splendid," he said, as he took the copy from me. "Come with me, and I will show you where the safe is concealed."

He led the way to a painting and grasped its frame, pulling it toward him. I was amazed to see it was on hinges so that as it was moved aside, a

wall safe was revealed. He opened it, carefully deposited the copy inside, then closed and locked it again.

"Miss Ward, I intend to give you the combination to that safe before long," he said. "Just in case anything happens to me."

"Why, sir," I exclaimed in sudden alarm, "do you feel you are in danger?"

"I haven't really thought about it," he said, smiling, "but we do have a mystery in the disappearance of my wife. At any rate, I have in the safe a sealed envelope, sworn and attested to, which directs what should be done if I should disappear or meet with sudden death."

"Yes, sir," I said, stunned at his words.

He waved a hand in dismissal and said, "That's all for today, Miss Ward."

I nodded and left the room. I did not see him again that evening. The only ones present at the table for our evening meal were Greta and Frank Elkin and myself. I thought, wryly, that I doubted they ever missed a meal.

Frank was his usual taciturn self and Greta as voluble as ever.

I had finished my coffee and was just about to rise, when Frank Elkin suddenly addressed me.

"Is Mr. Templeton really dictating his memoirs to you, Miss?"

"That's why I'm here, Mr. Elkin," I replied quietly.

"That blasted idiot!" Mr. Elkin threw his napkin down, pushed his chair back, and stalked out of the room. Greta began to cry. I was too astounded either to move or to speak.

"Frank is so impetuous, dear," she said, drying her tears. "I never know what is on his mind. And when he expresses himself, I am so confounded by what he has said, I am quite beside myself."

"Why should he be so upset because Mr. Templeton is writing his memoirs?" I asked politely.

"I don't know," she replied, sniffling. "I just never know what he is thinking about. He is so uncommunicative. Even when we're alone, he's like that. I don't lead a very happy life."

"I'm very sorry, Greta," I said, trying to console her. "Perhaps he doesn't realize that what he is doing causes you such concern."

"Well, don't think too harshly of him, dear," she said, attempting a smile. "He isn't unkind to me. I don't mean to imply that. But he shouldn't have called Joel an idiot. He's angry, I know, because of what Joel has seen fit to do. I can't say I like it either. No one likes to have things put on paper about them. Especially when we don't know what Joel is saying." She paused and when she spoke again, her eyes pleaded with me. "Tell me, dear, is he saying dreadful things about the family?"

"Would you say Mr. Templeton is an unkind person?" I countered.

"Indeed not," she exclaimed indignantly. "And I made no such insinuation."

"I know you didn't, nor did I mean to imply such. However, I am not at liberty to divulge anything of what Mr. Templeton has dictated to me."

"I see." Her manner cooled, as if she had never expected I would refuse to take her into my confidence.

"And now, Greta, please excuse me. I have some duties I must perform in my office."

"Of course," she said stiffly. "Good night."

I really had nothing to do, and the evening proved to be as monotonous as the afternoon. However, I did check my desk, to discover that it had not been touched during my absence. I really hadn't expected it to be, since the household was undoubtedly aware that the typed notes were already in the safe.

I had learned that both Greta and Frank Elkin were as curious to know what Mr. Templeton's memoirs contained as was Philip Morgan. I wondered why. I couldn't believe that Greta's worries were as simple as just wishing not to be one of the characters in the memiors to be put on paper. Her motive for curiosity was stronger than that. They were a strange group, and certainly their loyalty was not to the man whose hospitality they shared.

I began to wonder if I was going to like this work after all. I was already tired of being urged to violate the confidence of my employer.

I finally disrobed, performed my ablutions, stepped into my nightdress, and brushed my hair until it glistened. Then I slipped into bed and read until the print danced before my eyes. I was pleased that there was no repetition of the strange footsteps I'd heard the first night. True, there were creaks and groans from the ancient house, and the surf kept up its endless play of sound, but there was nothing to alarm or startle me.

The next morning I reported for work in the library at eight promptly, and two minutes later my pencil was flying over the shorthand pad. Joel was beginning to dig deeply now, and his words were mostly concerned with Frank Elkin's membership in the Templeton clan.

Greta married Frank four months after her mother died. Since he had established no home for her, and apparently had no intention of doing so, they had returned to this house, where she had grown up with her widowed mother.

Greta was the last blood relative remaining. Upon Mr. Templeton's death, the family would likewise die.

Toward the end of the day he began dictating a new line of thought. It was like reading the report of the police assigned to solve a murder.

"My wife, Bess, was not a person who would simply walk out of my life without saying a word. If she wished to leave, I would have heard all about it in a storm of protests and accusations.

Neither would my wife go away and leave her choice possessions behind for me to either sell, give away, or keep for a possible future wife, should there be one. Bess was far too possessive and jealous of her things to do that. Furthermore, she was in sound mind, for she was shrewd and clever up to the last moment I saw her. She was likewise in good health and, barring an accident, not likely to have been taken acutely ill somewhere, to die alone. Templeton Hall is a remote place. Nothing in the way of transportation was missing, nor was it evident that any had been used; so if she left of her own volition, she must have walked. All this indicates one thing. Bess Templeton did not leave my home willingly. She was either tricked or forcibly taken away, to what fate I know not. I have searched my mind and my memory in an effort to learn what happened to her, and I have found nothing."

He paused for breath. I waited for more, but he suddenly made up his mind that was enough for one day.

"Put your notes away as usual, and let's see what happens," he said. "You do understand what I'm after, Miss Ward?"

"Yes, sir," I said. "If someone is so interested in what you have been dictating to me, that person can have but one reason. He or she knows what happened to Mrs. Templeton and is anxious to

learn if you also know it or are about to guess properly."

"Excellent," he said with a smile. "You're sure you wish to continue with this? It might become dangerous."

"Oh, I hardly think I shall be in any danger," I said lightly. "There would be no motive for them to harm me. Tomorrow I shall typewrite all this copy and have it for you by evening so you may lock it away."

"Good. You're very efficient, Miss Ward."

I rose. "Thank you, sir."

"You're also most attractive, and I find it comforting to have you here. Good night, Miss Ward."

I was so elated by his words that it was with difficulty I kept from dancing from the room. He had actually expressed an opinion about me. The thought heartened me and brushed away the feeling of loneliness that had hovered about me all day.

EIGHT/

I WAS almost tempted to begin my typewriting that night, but I had no means of really protecting the copy, so I changed my mind. I was restless. Social life in this household was completely lacking. Frank and Greta never seemed to come down except for their meals. What they did with their time I had no idea. Philip seemed to be outside most of the day, Mr. Templeton was busy with his own work, and I certainly couldn't seek out the company of Captain Hoyt.

I again retired early and read. For some reason I was uneasy, as if I sensed that something was about to happen; yet the house seemed quiet and peaceful. After I blew out the lamp, I found myself listening again for those mysterious footsteps, but I heard nothing. I thought about the compliment Joel had paid me, and a smile touched my lips. At least, he had noticed me. But then, so had Philip Morgan, though his words may have been sheer flattery in an effort to have me betray Joel.

Joel was engaged in a dangerous bit of business, and I knew he worried about my part in it. If he was innocent of his wife's murder, then the one responsible would take quick and deadly steps if Joel got too close to the truth. That was his purpose, and he might be well prepared for danger, but it might strike at him so swiftly he'd be unable to defend himself. I found myself thinking of him now as Joel. I knew I shouldn't, but so long as I didn't make so bold as to address him as Joel, I was not overstepping the bounds of propriety.

I felt myself drifting off into normal sleep. I would have a full day's work tomorrow; so I stopped my wandering thoughts and let myself drift off. . . . But then it seemed I smelled something sickeningly sweet and oppressive, much like the perfume of flowers when there are too many of them in a confined space. It was overwhelming. I tried to open my eyes and sit up, but I couldn't move. I seemed to be gripped by a strange sort of paralysis.

Of course it was but a dream. I was subject to them, and some were very frightening, as this one seemed about to be. The sweet odor grew suffocatingly stronger. Then I seemed to hear the footsteps again, and there was a sound like that of a sliding door being pulled open. I tried once more to raise up, to pry open my eyelids; yet I was quite unable to. Presently I had the sensation of moving, but not of my own volition. It was as if I

were being carried. My cheek rested against some rough material. I had the sensation of a cooling breeze striking me, and then I was jarred at short, regular intervals as if I were being carried down steps.

Still I could do nothing, and my mind kept saying over and over again that it was but a dream. I seemed to have been carried a long distance and out into the open as well, for I could smell the sea. That was odd. I'd been smelling only that heavy, sweet odor, but now it had changed to crisp, salt air. The coolness increased as well.

I fought valiantly to move, to raise my head, to open one eyelid or raise one finger, but it proved impossible. Presently I felt myself being lowered onto a fairly soft, but quite rough surface, and there I lay, helpless and inert.

"Lorraine . . . Lorraine . . . You can hear me. I will it that you hear me. . . ."

It was a man's voice; there was no doubt of that, and it seemed to come from miles off, like words being spoken through a long tube. There was nothing about the voice in the least familiar, though it could even have been Joel's, for I couldn't have recognized it under these circumstances.

"Lorraine . . . Lorraine . . . You may answer me. You may speak. . . ."

I said, "Yes . . . yes, I hear you." That was my voice, amazingly enough.

"Good. You are perfectly safe. No one will harm you. Are you now aware of that?"

"Yes," I said with considerable effort, and it was my own voice that I heard; so I knew I must have been speaking aloud.

"What did Joel Templeton dictate today?"

I should have risen up and defied whoever asked that question, but I discovered I didn't want to—it was far too much of an effort. It was easier to answer the question. There was no desire on my part to evade or lie.

"He . . . dictated . . . his thoughts about the disappearance of his wife."

"What . . . did he say about it?"

"He thinks she was murdered. He doesn't think she just went away."

"Why does he think that?"

"None of her clothes were missing. No carriages or horses were used."

"What else? Is there more to make him suspect foul play?"

"She had retired for the evening, and yet some jewelry was gone. No clothing, only jewelry. A woman doesn't wear bracelets and charms to bed. I pointed that out to Mr. Templeton."

"Very clever of you, Lorraine. You're a smart girl. Does Joel know where his wife's body is?"

"I . . . do not know."

"He must have said something about it. Mentioned some word."

"I do not believe he knows. I believe he wishes to find out, but he does not know at this time."

I shouldn't be saying this. I was violating the trust Joel had placed in me. I knew it, but I couldn't help myself. But then, it was only a dream. I found myself giggling and then laughing. Someone spoke in a softer voice. I didn't know what was being said, but in a short time I began to feel choked by that overpoweringly sweet odor again. My laughing stopped; I began slipping into complete blackness.

The voice again, but I couldn't hear it distinctly enough to understand. And try as I might, I could not answer. That same terrible lethargy seemed to hold me fast once more.

"Lorraine . . . Lorraine . . ." he was saying. Plainer now. Something was touching my hand, my fingertips. It was very rough, like a piece of unfinished wood. My fingertips just touched it, but the sensation was clear enough.

"Lorraine . . . you can hear me now. You can answer me if you wish. Try to speak, Lorraine. Don't be afraid."

"I'm not . . . afraid," I heard my voice say. But I *was* afraid. Terribly frightened. This dream was too real. There were too many sensations connected with it. Dreams didn't often involve the sense of touch, or smell.

"Good . . . good," the voice said soothingly. "That's how you must always feel with me. Un-

afraid, for I wouldn't harm you for the world. My dear, tell me where Joel places the memoirs you have typed for him."

"In . . . his . . . safe. . . ." I was violating his trust again, but I was quite unable to help myself.

"The one in the library?"

"Yes . . . In the . . . library. . . ."

"Tell me what the combination is, Lorraine."

"I . . . don't know it."

"Surely he trusts you enough to tell you the combination. It's so easy to tell me. The numbers . . . Lorraine . . . the numbers. . . ."

"He said he would . . . tell it . . . someday soon. I do not know it . . . now . . . I swear. . . ."

"That's all right. I just wanted to be sure you were telling me the truth. When Joel does give you the combination, you'll tell it to me, won't you?"

"I . . . don't know who you are."

"You will, one day."

"I don't know how to reach you."

"I will come for you, my dear. Then you will tell me."

"Yes," I said, making a promise I would strive with all my might not to keep. But when he asked anything of me, I had no power of resistance. It was as if I no longer had any will of my own.

"Now tell me what else he dictated. There is no hurry, Lorraine. We have all night. Take your time and tell me all he told you."

"I . . . cannot remember all of it. . . . My notes . . ."

"Think hard. You will remember if you think. It's all there in your mind. What else did he tell you?"

"No," I managed to say. "No . . . I cannot . . ."

My head was violently moved, but I felt nothing. I heard a sound like that of the blow of a hand against flesh. Then the far-off voice spoke with a tone of anger.

"Don't do that again, do you hear me? You're a fool!"

There was a mumbling sound close by. I wasn't interested. All I wanted to do was rid myself of this incredible dream and fall into refreshing sleep. I wanted this man to let me go. I was growing too confused. Then that horrible sweet smell again. I made up my mind not to breathe, but just to lie there until it went away, but it wasn't going away, and I had to breathe, and then all was quiet and blackness, and the dream went away.

Someone was shaking me. I knew there was no sense in my trying to move because I could not, but when I raised my hand to ward off the person who shook me so annoyingly, my arm did move. I opened my eyes. Mrs. Davis was bending over me, and there was concern in her eyes.

I sat up. There was an awful dryness in my

throat, and my senses were reeling. I looked at her helplessly, wondering if I could speak.

"What . . . happened . . .?" I managed to ask.

"That's what Mr. Templeton wants to know," she said. Now that I seemed to be all right, the worry went out of her eyes. "It's long past time you should be up, Miss."

"But . . . it seems I just went to bed. . . ."

"I have no way of knowing when you went to bed, Miss, but it's past eight already, and you're the last one abed. Mr. Templeton's not a patient man, as you'll find out when you see him."

I swung my legs off the bed and stood up. I swayed dizzily. The floor seemed to tilt before my eyes.

"What is wrong?" she demanded, her eyes regarding me suspiciously. "Are you ill?"

"I . . . don't know. I . . . feel so strange. . . ."

"I'll fetch you a cup of coffee," she said. "Best you get dressed quick now. You've kept him waiting long enough."

I staggered into the bathroom and looked at myself in the mirror. The reflection was a bit blurred, it seemed, as if my eyes were filmed. I dashed cold water onto my face, and I suddenly cried out in pain as my hand touched my face. The right side of my jaw was terribly sore. I gently patted my face dry, taking especial care with the afflicted side, and I wondered what was the matter with it. Then I

remembered that horrible nightmare. In it, I'd heard the sound of a slap. Could someone have struck me? Could that dream have been so real that I had a soreness from the imagined slap? It seemed impossible and quite silly, but there was no denying that I had a tender jaw.

I was dressed by the time Mrs. Davis returned with a mug of steaming coffee. I thanked her and sipped it while I put up my hair. My brain seemed to have cleared by this time, and I felt no further ill effects. That had been a nightmare I didn't want to go through again.

I stopped by my little office to pick up note pads and pencils, taking time to examine the thread. It was hanging free. Someone had opened the center drawer again. I checked carefully, making certain my notes were still intact, and then, after setting the trap once again, I hurried down to the library.

Apparently, the drug hadn't yet worn off, for when I started to cross the room to where Joel awaited me, I reeled and had to reach out for a chair for support. When Joel saw my condition, he jumped up and ran to my side.

"What is it, Miss Ward? Are you ill?" He eased me onto a settee and sat down beside me.

"No." I pressed my hand against my brow. "I'm quite all right. It's just that I had a rather frightening dream."

"What sort of dream?" he asked with concern.

"Oh"—I couldn't relate it to him, for I felt he would think me ridiculous—"it's nothing really. I have been subject to nightmares ever since the death of my mother, who was killed by a runaway while crossing the street to where my father and I awaited her."

"I'm so sorry." He spoke with feeling. "That would leave its effect on you. I presume you were not grown."

"I wasn't. My father died a year later. From grief, the doctor said."

"Have these nightmares had this effect on you before?"

"No," I replied. "I don't recall ever having felt so benumbed by them that I was not alert the following day. They've left me exhausted, but not feeling—almost ill and dazed."

"Then I shan't dictate to you today," he said.

"Have you forgotten," I asked, "that I am to typewrite today?"

"I had," he replied, "and I do beg your pardon for such thoughtlessness. I'm sorry I had Mrs. Davis awaken you."

"I'm glad you did," I replied, "and I am quite capable of carrying out my duties."

"Are you certain?" he asked. "There is no need for haste, you know. And I would prefer that you return to your room and have a much-needed rest, for you do look ill."

"I'll take a brief walk about the grounds after breakfast. I'm sure that will revitalize me."

However, after I ate, I didn't feel capable of taking a stroll, and I returned to the room I used as an office. Then I remembered I'd meant to tell him about the thread, but my mind had been so sluggish that I'd forgotten. I seated myself at the machine and began to type, but I was very slow. I paused and sat there, thinking of that part of the dream where I told someone what was in these notes. It did seem so real to me, even now, that a shudder of fear went through me. I touched my jaw and found it still sore. I wondered about it; then suddenly the answer came. I had slept on it in some way, and the pain had made it part of the nightmare. Previously, however, those painful dreams I'd been troubled with had always concerned horses in the process of running me down.

It was useless trying to work. I went into the bedroom, already tidied up by one of the maids, and I lay down. Almost at once I fell asleep. It was after ten when I awakened, but now I felt refreshed. My jaw still ached, and I still had vivid memories of the dream, but my brain was alert, and when I sat down to typewrite, I soon had my old speed back.

I used the bellpull in the bedroom for the first time and summoned a maid. I asked her to bring me a tray, for I didn't wish to take the time to go

down to dine. When she returned with an ample repast, I ate it while I worked.

By midafternoon, I knew I had made up the time I'd spent in sleeping some of the morning away, and I felt no further giddiness from the weird nightmare. The only reminder of it now was my jaw, which was still sore. I finished the last of my notes, gathered up all the papers, and stacked them neatly. I'd have to take them down to Joel now, and I looked forward to it.

I went into the bathroom to wash the ink from the typewriter ribbon from my fingers. No matter how careful I was, they became smeared with it. I had just returned to my office, when there was a tap on the door. I opened it to see Joel standing there, a wide smile on his face.

"May I come in?"

"Yes, sir," I replied, stepping back.

He entered and closed the door after him. I walked over to my desk and sat down. As he took a chair alongside it and regarded the neat stack of papers and notes on my desk, surprise registered on his face. "Don't tell me you've completed the transcription of my notes?"

"Oh yes, sir. And I'd have been done much sooner, except that I had to lie down this morning."

"You really shouldn't have worked at all. Though I will say you seem quite bright and alert now."

"I've fully recovered," I assured him with a smile.

"Good." He placed his hand on the desk, and his fingers started to tap the surface. While it was not a nervous gesture, it seemed to indicate he had something on his mind. When he spoke, I was assured that he had.

"I came here, not to check on the amount of work you had done, but to speak to you on quite another matter."

"Yes, sir." I folded my hands on the desk and gave him my full attention.

"Oh come, Lorraine," he said. "Let us not be so formal. I confess I heard you and Philip talking last night, and you addressed each other by your first names. Do you object if I so address you?"

"No, sir," I said.

"And you may call me Joel."

"I think that would not be proper, sir," I replied demurely.

"And why not?" he demanded, showing slight irritation.

"Because I am not in Philip's employ, and in order to show the proper respect for you, I feel I should continue to address you as Mr. Templeton."

A hint of a smile touched one corner of his mouth. "Very well, if you must. But I shall call you Lorraine. I like the name, and I like you."

"Thank you, sir."

He sighed. "You are difficult to know, but I believe I understand the reason for your coldness."

"I'm not cold, sir."

"You are—a little," he contradicted. "And I detect Celeste's fine hand in it. In fact, I know it was she."

I remained silent, and there was nothing for him to do but to continue.

"She told me about meeting you on the sloop, then going below to claim a dress."

"That does not concern me, sir," I said stiffly.

"I'm quite aware of that," he replied. "Nor do I have to make explanations to you."

"That is true, sir, and now if you wish to take —" My hands moved to pick up the papers on the desk.

"I haven't finished," he said, breaking in.

I settled back in my chair, feeling a faint irritation toward this man who was intent on telling me about something I had no wish to hear—his relationship with Celeste.

"Celeste told me about going below and taking a gown, to return and tell you she had forgotten it. She thinks it was quite a joke. I don't—for two reasons. First, I don't appreciate that kind of joke. Secondly, the gown didn't happen to be hers."

My eyes were regarding the copy on my desk, but when he said that, they raised in shocked surprise.

"The gown happened to belong to my wife," Joel stated.

"But you said Mrs. Templeton hated the water," I replied, remembering every word this man had spoken in my presence.

"She did, I assure you, but in order to make certain I would not forget for an instant, she insisted on having a complete wardrobe aboard. I just wanted you to know the truth. I was never unfaithful to my wife."

I lowered my eyes as color suffused my face. I felt a deep sense of shame—as I should have, for I had believed him guilty of a grave indiscretion.

"I apologize, Mr. Templeton, for having . . ." I paused, unable to go on.

"It's all right. No doubt Philip told you that Celeste and I were once going to be married. It never quite reached that stage, though at one time I did believe myself to be in love with her. I've already told you I never loved Bess. I pitied her; and after I married her, I felt I had done her a grave injustice and tried my best to make it up to her. But she was an overly possessive, demanding creature who seemed bent on making my life a living hell. But she had no family, and I had made my life, and I did my best to live it in as decent a fashion as possible. I'm not always the easiest person in the world to get along with. I have my faults, too, some of which I'm sure you are already aware of. Perhaps my loneliness made me change.

I concentrated on my business, doing my best to forget my personal unhappiness." He rose. "Well, I guess that about covers the subject."

"Mr. Templeton," I said, also rising, "I wish you to know I hold you in the utmost respect. I am pleased to be here working for you, and I shall do my best to fulfill my duties in a way that will please you."

"Thank you, Lorraine," he said, smiling. "Even if you won't call me Joel."

"I cannot," I said. "It—it would not be proper."

"And you are a very proper young lady. No, I'm not laughing at you. I like it. I thoroughly approve of it and would have it no other way."

"Thank you, sir," I said, returning the smile. "And now, may I show you the little trap I've arranged so that I can see if my desk has been tampered with?"

I reached under the desk and pulled up the length of thread, which blended into the color of the desk. I showed him how I placed the thread under the note pad, and then I pulled open the drawer so that the thread was dislodged.

"This is how I know when someone goes through my desk. Last night, it was disturbed again. Whoever does it has a key, because during the day, the key is on my person. At night, I conceal it beneath my undergarments in a drawer. I doubt it would be easily found."

"Very clever," he said admiringly as he re-

garded the thread. "And what you have told me is most interesting. Tomorrow I'm going to draw a bit closer to the disappearance of my wife. You know, I wonder if anyone can read your shorthand?"

"I am wondering the same thing, though it hardly seems possible. Pittman is quite difficult to master."

"I agree. I can't think of a single person in the house, with the exception of Philip, who could have mastered it. With him, we have a possibility, for he was well educated, and somewhere during his education, he might have been taught the system."

"I hope, sir, I won't antagonize you if I mention Miss Bond. Shorthand, as you may know, is mainly taught to females."

"True, though I can't imagine her having access to the house during the night, and that is when you say your desk was disturbed."

I nodded. "Also, there is scarcely a motive unless . . ."

He read my mind and answered, "I know Celeste's reputation for daring and ruthlessness, but I scarcely think she would resort to murder."

I didn't know, but I was quite aware that she was in love with Joel, for no less a person than Philip had told me. He had also told me to beware of her, though I saw no reason to pass such words on to Joel. It would make me seem quite petty.

"However," Joel reasoned, "where there may be murder involved, no one who knew the supposed victim can be removed from the cloud of suspicion. I know I am the most logical suspect, and everyone else knows that too, but I also know I did not kill my wife."

He moved around the desk. "I fear we're making no progress in our reasonings or suspicions, so I suggest we go down to the library now and lock these papers in the safe."

"Under the circumstances, I think it most wise. I shall feel a great sense of relief when they are safe from prying eyes."

"So will I, Lorraine. So will I."

I carried the sheaf of papers and notes, and we went down to the library. Joel closed the door behind us and went directly to the large painting. As before, he swung it from the wall, then dialed the combination and pulled the door open. He placed the day's work in with the other papers, then closed and locked the safe.

He turned to me and said, "I believe I should give you the combination now."

At once a feeling of uneasiness assailed me. "Please, sir, not now. I'd rather not know it."

His brows raised in surprise. "But someone else must, and you're the only person I trust."

"I appreciate your confidence in me, but I beg of you not to give me the combination at this time."

"But why not?"

My eyes beseeched him for understanding. I couldn't tell him it was because of a nightmare that I feared learning the numbers that would open the door of that safe and reveal vital information—information that might reveal a murderer. I couldn't say that I might betray his confidence—in a dream! It would sound ridiculous. Yet I feared knowing those numbers!

"Sir, I would rather not say why. But wait a little, please, I beg of you."

"Very well," he said, regarding me with concern. "Is there something you know that you haven't told me? Something you've seen on the premises or even heard?"

"No," I said truthfully. "Nothing."

"You can trust me, Lorraine."

"I know," I replied, but I flinched inwardly hearing his words, for I wondered if he could trust me. In my dream, I had betrayed him. Betrayed the man who had just told me I was the only one he could trust. My horror must have shown in my face, for he moved close to me and his hands raised and touched my shoulders lightly.

"My dear," he said, "I have an intuition which tells me I should never have brought you here. If anything should happen to you, I would never forgive myself."

"Don't speak so," I cried. "You have given me a

wonderful opportunity to work in a charming atmosphere. I was about to seek summer employment when you made me the offer. And Judge Gaylord felt no reluctance about my coming here to work, for he had only words of high praise for you."

"I am deeply touched to hear that," Joel said softly. "It is good to know there are others in this world who believe in my integrity." His hands moved down to grasp mine. "If you are troubled about anything, Lorraine, promise you will come to me. Promise!"

"I promise," I said. "And soon I shall ask you to give me the combination to the safe, but not now."

His hands tightened around mine for the merest second, and his glance was warm. Then he released my hands and stepped back.

"Good night, Lorraine. I trust you will sleep well."

"Good night, Mr. Templeton."

I turned and walked from the room, my heart pounding madly, sending the blood coursing through my veins so that I almost felt as if I would suffocate. Just when I'd felt I had my emotions under control, Joel had paid me a visit, and now I was once again under his spell. I was positive his feelings for me were those of a guardian for a ward. He had given no evidence it was other than that. Yet I knew that, foolish girl that I was, I

was losing my heart to him, and I feared mightily I might reveal such to him in a mere glance. How I hoped no one else in the household would suspect, for I felt I would be the object of scorn. Wearily, I made my way to my room, eager to be alone, to quiet the wild beating of my heart.

NINE/

It was with a deep sense of relief that I awakened the next morning to find that I was completely myself again. I'd gone to bed the night before fearful that the nightmare would repeat itself, but I'd slept very well indeed. I lay there a moment and thought of Joel, of his gentle and kindly manner the night before. How anyone could even suspect that he would do away with his wife was beyond me. Despite what he had dictated in his memoirs of his lack of feeling toward her, I felt him completely innocent of any wrongdoing.

I slipped from bed, bathed, and dressed quickly, for today I would take dictation from him, and I wished to be there promptly at eight o'clock. Before I left my rooms, I checked the thread and smiled in gratification that it had not been tampered with. However, it also proved that whoever had done it before was undoubtedly aware that there was no freshly dictated material.

During my breakfast, Mrs. Davis hovered about the table.

"Mr. Philip left a message for you, Miss, expressing his regrets that he would not be able to see you. It was necessary for him to go to New York."

"Thank you, Mrs. Davis," I replied. I doubted I'd have had any time to devote to Philip, but it was gracious of him to think of me.

"I suppose you're busy taking down things about my late mistress." She spoke with a casualness that was belied by the studied look she gave me.

"I am not at liberty to discuss just what Mr. Templeton is dictating to me," I replied.

"I wasn't meaning to pry," she said stiffly.

"I'm sure you weren't," I replied. "I also believe you must understand that my loyalty to Mr. Templeton is as complete as yours was to Mrs. Templeton. And as it should be to Mr. Templeton."

"Indeed," she retorted, now making no attempt to hide her hostility. "You're pretty uppity for a newcomer here. Don't be too sure of yourself, Miss."

She clasped her hands across her stomach and flounced out with the hiss of her starched apron. I repressed a smile and turned my attention back to my breakfast.

When I entered the library, Joel awaited me.

He was standing by the window, and I was no sooner seated than he started to dictate without so much as a good morning or any evidence of the attention he had shown me last night. But I had no time to dwell on it, for he had apparently gone over his notes and was dictating briskly. Nor did he stop as he made his way over to his desk and sat down, picking up his notes.

He dwelt upon Bess for more than two hours, going back into her past until I felt I knew the poor woman. Without question she'd been vain. Also petty, jealous, and a nag. He listed all her friends and noted, in detail, what he knew about them. Yet, when he had finished this portion of his memoirs, I was still as confused as ever about what had really happened to her.

Now he returned to that theme again, going deeper than he had the day before yesterday and offering one theory after another.

"Motives are lacking," he dictated to me. "Bess herself offended many, but no one to a degree that would cause them to wish her harm. Therefore, should she have been done away with as I suspect, it could only have been as a means of getting revenge on me. Or getting rid of me, for if I were arrested for her murder, I would quite likely be convicted. I feel that may be the motive after all, and therefore I am still exposed to the danger of the success of this scheme.

"Now as to what happened to Bess, what

method was used to be rid of her, I can offer only the fact that on this estate there are many places where a body could be well hidden. Because I have some faith in the theory that the body is close at hand, I intend to list every nook and cranny in which it could be concealed. In order to do this, I am now in the process of making an extended tour of the estate, of the house, and of the coastline, and I shall continue to do so until I am positive her body is not hidden hereabouts. I shall soon list each in my memoirs, that there may be a complete record.

"I have already made an extended search for Bess among the friends and relatives she had—even the most casual friends. I have examined all her diaries, address books, dance cards, anything that might have a name on it, and I have contacted these people. None has seen her or heard from her. She did not go off to be alone, for she hated and feared that. She always had to have someone around. More and more, I grow convinced she is dead and her body has been buried not far from here. If such is the case, I shall find it. I shall locate her even if, by doing so, I shall be in danger of being arrested for her murder. Now I shall list all those persons with whom I have been in contact—those who knew her even remotely."

I began taking down the names and addresses as he read them to me, and there were a number.

When he finished, it was some time after three, and we were both exhausted.

"May I suggest, Lorraine," he said as he gathered up his notes, preparatory to placing them in the safe, "that we rid ourselves of this tension and relax by going for a swim."

I smiled. "The suggestion has appeal. sir, but I did not bring a bathing suit."

"That's no problem, I'm sure," he said with a smile. "You appear to be exactly Bess's size. She had several, though she never used them. Do you know which room is hers?"

"No," I replied.

"Then come with me." He rose, placed his papers in the safe, locked it, and moved the painting to its proper position, and we left the library.

Upstairs, he led me to the closed doubled doors that were near my room. Opening them, he waved a hand in the direction of the bedroom.

"Search through the drawers. I'm sure you'll find something appropriate."

I thanked him and went directly to the bedroom. I noticed that these rooms were overly furnished and decorated as was the family parlor downstairs. So much clutter gave one the impression of a disorderly, restless mind.

I went directly to a bureau, hesitating a moment as my hands reached out to open a drawer. It seemed sacrilegious to do so. However, I had been

given permission; so I drew open a deep drawer, but found only undergarments in it. I searched the others and then went to a highboy, still meeting with no success. I moved over to a closet and entered its interior, and in the rear I found six bathing suits hanging. Alongside them, on a shelf, were bathing caps. I selected a suit and a cap and returned to my rooms.

The first thing I did was to lock my notes in the drawer, placing the thread so that I would know if it were disturbed during my absence. Then I disrobed and donned the dark-blue suit with white trim. It fit perfectly.

I left the house, going directly to the beach. As I made my way there, my mind dwelt idly on Bess's suite. There had been not the slightest evidence that Joel had shared her quarters.

It was becoming increasingly apparent to me why Joel had been arrested on suspicion of murder, for what he had dictated to me, besides what he had told me, assured me he had borne his wife no love—nor could she have any for him. The thought was frightening. Could it be, I wondered, that he was writing these memoirs in a effort to throw suspicion from himself? That the whole thing was but a ruse? The very thought of such a thing was appalling, and I thrust it from my mind, for he trusted me and was deserving of my loyalty.

I had reached the beach, and, much to my surprise, I saw Captain Hoyt walking over the sand,

using a blackthorn stick to ease his way. He saw me at about the same time, and his grizzled face tightened in lines of disapproval.

"Humph. S'pose he's meetin' you here. Thought you came here to work. Not surprised one bit at the carryin's on."

"Captain Hoyt," I said stiffly, "I am conducting myself in a perfectly proper manner, and it would please me if you would mind your own business."

"You're in love with him," he said. "Could see it in your face the moment I laid eyes on you. Those big lovesick eyes of yours are just filled with it. S'pose he feels the same way 'bout you. Well, you'll get what you deserve. Don't forget he has a wife missing. No one else had any reason to kill her 'cept him. And he's a Templeton. They're capable of anything—even murder. You had any sense, which you ain't, since I already told you to go and you're still here, you'd run away from here as fast as your legs could carry you."

"If you say anything more," I warned, "I shall tell Mr. Templeton. I'm sure he would not like it."

"You'll tell him anyway. No woman ever could keep her mouth shut. Go ahead and tell him. He and his have done everything to me that could be done. A little more ain't goin' to hurt none."

He turned and walked away, hitting at the sand with the end of the blackthorn. Once he turned and looked back.

"You're stuck on him. It shows like it was writ. He won't have you. Mark my word, he won't have you."

It was with difficulty that I concealed the agitation I felt when Joel came running down the path. Without a pause, he shouted to me and as he reached me, took my hand, and pulled me after him straight into the water.

I screeched at the first impact, for it seemed cold, but he seized me and ducked me under, and after a moment or two the water actually felt warm and pleasant.

"Let me see how well you swim," he ordered. We were standing almost shoulder deep in the surf.

Accordingly, I dived under the water, surfaced, and struck out. I wasn't very good. I have never completely mastered the art, but I managed to stay afloat. He came alongside me, swimming with long, sure strokes.

"You need lots of practice," he called out. "I'll see you get it. Not afraid, are you?"

"No, sir. Not with you nearby," I called back, and he smiled. Then he swam closer, and his arm went about my waist. He began giving me instructions and after a short time, I was swimming far better.

We waded ashore when I grew breathless, and we dropped gratefully down onto the sand.

He reached over and slipped my bathing cap from my head, and my hair tumbled over my shoulders down to my waist.

"I like the lights in your hair with the sun shining on it," he said. "I like the color, too. Chestnut, isn't it?"

"Yes," I replied. I was startled by what he had done, and a strange shyness seemed to overcome me; yet I was pleased with his compliment.

"You'll be good," he said, "but at present don't try any long-range swims. You aren't strong enough nor trained well enough. We'll try to do this often, and before long you'll become expert at it."

"Hardly that," I said, "but I do enjoy the water far better than I thought I would."

He lay back, shading his eyes with his arm. "You know, Lorraine, this is the first time I've been swimming with anyone in months. Celeste used to come over now and then, but after Bess disappeared, it would not have been appropriate. Bess, as I've already told you, hated the water."

"I'm glad I accepted your invitation for a swim," I told him gratefully. "I enjoyed it."

"I'm glad you came too, Lorraine," he said, smiling. "And I hope you will remain until my work is completed."

"I intend to, Mr. Templeton," I replied, "unless I displease you in some way."

"I hardly think you'll do that. However, I did catch a glimpse of Captain Hoyt as he left the beach. Did he annoy you?"

"Yes," I admitted. "But he is just naturally cantankerous. I know it now; so I shan't let him upset me when he tosses a barrage of words at me."

"Please don't," he said soberly. "I suppose I shouldn't allow him to remain here when he bears me such ill will, but I feel sorry for him. He really has no place to go."

"It would be cruel to send him away," I agreed. "He's lonely and embittered and believes ill of everyone."

"I fear he does. Tell me, do you like Philip?"

"It would be difficult not to. Is he like his father?"

Joel frowned. "Earl doesn't come here very often. He prefers to remain in New York, where he can manage things. Truthfully, we don't get along too well. He is of the opinion that because he's been in the shipping business twenty-five years, he knows more than the Templetons, who have been in it for well over a hundred years. There's part of all my ancestors in me, and every one has been a seagoing man. The women were hardy, too, much like you."

"But I don't consider myself as hardy," I protested.

"I didn't mean in physical strength. It's moral fiber that counts the most. There was one episode

in my family history—I'll get it into the memoirs when the time comes to do it. This Templeton married a city woman. At that time all Templetons thought all city women were weaklings. This one didn't know a net from a ship's deck, though she tried to learn. She wasn't too good at it, but she kept trying. The other women laughed at her or ignored her."

"How did she prove herself?" I asked, very much interested now.

"They were doing a great deal of fishing that winter. Her husband's boat didn't come back. There was a bell in the village and they tolled it when a ship foundered. They tolled it this day. All the women dressed themselves in black and trooped to the church to pray. But this citybred young lady didn't join them, and she refused pointblank to wear the widow's weeds."

"What happened?" I cried eagerly.

"You know what she did? She couldn't clean house well, she couldn't repair a net, and she hated cleaning a fish; but she could bake the biggest and most delicious cakes you ever saw. So this day, when everybody gave up the ship and its crew for lost and went to church to pray, looking like black ravens in their mourning clothes—this city-bred girl just up and baked the biggest cake ever. And she decorated it 'WELCOME HOME,' and she put it on the table, and then she sat down to wait. Sure enough, the ship hadn't sunk. Her

husband came home safe. From then on, nobody laughed at her, and when she died, she was honored as if she had been one of generations of seagoing folk."

"What a wonderful story," I said. "Joel, are you sure you didn't make it up?"

"It will be in the memoirs," he said. "I'll even show you an old painting of her. She sort of reminds me of you. And thanks for addressing me by my first name."

My hand rose quickly and covered my mouth. His name had slipped out so easily I'd not even been aware of it.

"I didn't mean to," I said. "I'm sorry."

"Nonsense," he retorted. "I asked you to last night. And since it came so naturally, I suggest you do it from now on."

"Very well," I replied.

He arose, extended his hands for mine, and lifted me up so that I stood very close to him—so close I was grateful for the pounding of the surf on the shore, which kept him from hearing the wild beating of my heart. For a brief moment our eyes met and held, and I thought he was going to draw me close. But the next instant he was smiling.

"Let's run to the house and work up an appetite for supper."

"Let's," I agreed, glad that the moment had passed; for I knew I must, under no circumstances, reveal the feeling I held for him.

As we started to run, he held my hand, but it was impossible for me to keep up with him. His arm went around my waist, and he was almost carrying me. When my feet would leave the ground, his laughter filled the air. When we reached the house, we were breathless, but still laughing.

We tracked sand on the floor, but it didn't seem to matter. His arm was still around me when we raced up the stairs, and our laughter rang through the house. It wasn't until we reached the top and came face to face with Mrs. Davis, whose features registered stern disapproval of our behavior, that we came to our senses.

Joel's hand dropped from around my waist, and I moved away from him and continued on to my rooms. There, I bathed, brushed and put up my hair, and donned a teagown. It was a mauve silk with a cascade of soft lace around the neck forming a jabot in front. There was another lace flounce around the hem.

I was pleased with the color in my cheeks and lips, brought about by my exertions of the afternoon. Glancing at my reflection I could scarcely believe I was the same person who had come here a few days ago. I felt very much alive, which was apparent in my face. I was also very much in love, and that part frightened me; first, because there was not the slightest evidence to indicate that Mrs. Templeton was dead; second, because even if

there had been, Joel had given no indication that he felt anything more for me than a mild affection. We got along well together, we worked well together, and we could laugh at the same things. It was a good basis on which to build a lasting love, but not with a man who was extremely cautious about giving any evidence of feeling for me.

Yet I was in love! With a man who had been arrested for the murder of his wife and released only because the evidence wasn't strong enough.

With a man who I was beginning to believe really did know what had happened to his wife, who might even know where her body was hidden.

Yet I trusted him and loved him. Of that I was certain, though it would ever be an unrequited love, and I must take great pains to conceal it or he would probably banish me from the estate; for one of the first things he had told me was that he would not marry again. I would have to take satisfaction in working for him, being in his presence, and helping him to uncover the murder of his wife. For of that crime, I would never believe him guilty.

TEN/

I WAS still exhilarated when I went down to dinner. Joel's smile, as he held the chair for me, was warm. Frank, as usual, was already seated, and Joel went over to seat his aunt. Philip had not put in an appearance; so I gathered he was still in New York City.

"Had quite a time for yourselves today, didn't you?" Frank blurted, as he tucked the edges of his napkin inside his coat.

"Oh, Frank, please," Greta exclaimed, her eyes glancing apologetically at Joel.

"As a matter of fact, we did," Joel replied mildly. "I see nothing wrong in it."

"Frank didn't mean that, I'm sure," Greta said.

"Didn't I?" he asked Greta. "You know perfectly well how it looks for a man who is suspect in the death of his wife to be cavorting with his secretary."

Greta was so astounded at his words that her mouth hung open. Joel, who had a spoonful of

delicious chicken broth halfway to his mouth, set it down and eyed Frank with growing anger.

"We were not cavorting," Joel replied. "Miss Ward happened to have put in a very hard day's work. She has no companionship here, and has had none since she came. I saw nothing wrong in giving her a few hours of relaxation."

"Of course there was nothing wrong with it," Greta said placatingly. "It's just that—well, you know how Captain Hoyt is—and then, there's Celeste."

"What about Celeste?" Joel demanded.

"If she were to see you, she—she might resent it."

"Your reason is silly," Joel replied. "I'm sure if Celeste were here, she'd have joined us. And I might also inform you that if I wished to go swimming with Celeste, I wouldn't hesitate to ride over to her estate and do so."

"It—it wouldn't be proper, Joel," Greta said.

"So long as I conduct myself in gentlemanly fashion, I shan't concern myself about the propriety of my acts."

Joel had, apparently, reached the end of his patience. He threw his napkin on the table, rose, and left the room. While I had come to the table with a ravenous appetite, I suddenly lost my desire to eat. Yet I felt that if I were to leave the table, it would appear that I had conducted myself in an

improper manner; so I remained and picked at my dinner. We ate in silence, and when I finished, I excused myself and went to my room.

I moved about restlessly, my mind filled with the recent unpleasantness in the dining room and thinking, too, of what Joel had said. How foolish I was to think that his interest in me was more than friendly, for he had plainly stated his reason for being with me this afternoon. He'd taken pity on me, thinking I was lonely, and had exerted himself to give me an hour of enjoyment. I had loved every moment of it; yet I would be fearful to repeat it were he even to suggest such a thing. Obviously, Greta and Frank did not approve. Joel had already warned me about them and not without cause, for they were certainly maintaining a watch over us.

Mrs. Davis, too, had hovered in the dining room, presumably to see if the maid was serving the dinner properly, but really to overhear every word that was spoken. Truly, this was not a house in which harmony reigned.

I could no longer stand being closed up in my rooms, and I decided to take a brief walk on the estate. I would remain away from Captain Hoyt's for I wanted no further bitterness to mar my day.

However, I had to say one thing in Captain Hoyt's favor—he maintained the gardens beautifully. It was a mass of bloom, and even in dark-

ness, the colors were apparent. The perfume of the roses from the arbor was overpowering, and I moved away from the spot, for it reminded me of the strange, sweetish smell I'd experienced in my dream. I had no wish to be reminded of that!

I found myself on a winding path between sculptured bushes. The pathway was of cinders, and the tread of a shoe made a definite crunching sound. I suddenly became aware of footsteps other than mine, though it seemed to me that whoever was following me was attempting to match their steps to mine in an effort at concealment.

I paused and turned, but could see no one—yet I had distinctly heard two steps.

"Please, whoever you are, come closer so I may see you. I don't like being followed."

I heard a gasp of astonishment and then quick steps on the cinders. For a moment I wondered if I'd been too brave, insisting that whoever it was approach me. However, my fears soon evaporated when I saw that it was Greta.

She hastened up to me, tugging nervously at the shawl which she had drawn over her shoulders.

"It was not my intent to spy on you, Lorraine," she said, her tone apologetic. "I merely wished to speak with you when no one else was about. Please forgive me for frightening you."

"Very well, Greta," I said courteously.

"There is a bench a few steps away. Suppose we go there and sit down."

We walked to the bench and seated ourselves, and I remained silent, waiting for her to speak. She seemed to have a little difficulty getting started, which was unusual for her.

"My dear, first of all, I wish to beg your forgiveness for the scene at the table tonight. Frank should never have mentioned it. I certainly never expected him to, but when he did, I thought I might help matters by explaining what people might think."

"I fear Mr. Templeton is not the sort of person who concerns himself with what people think so long as he conducts himself properly. And I assure you, he does."

"But of course he does," she exclaimed. "He's my nephew—and I've known him since he was a babe. A very headstrong boy, and he became even more so as he grew up. But he is a success and has added to the family fortunes." She paused, as if uncertain of herself, then went on, "I do have a question concerning Joel which I would like to ask, for you are in a most favorable position to answer me."

"I'm not quite certain what you mean, but I shall be happy to answer you if it does not violate any confidence concerning my work."

"Oh, indeed not," she assured me. "I would not

ask you to betray Joel. Heavens, no. But you were connected with the criminal court. Is it true that Joel can once again be arrested and tried for the murder of poor, dear Bess?"

"I'm sorry to have to state that it is, for he was never officially placed on trial."

"But that would be dependent on poor Bess's body being found."

"That would be one of the requirements."

"Poor Joel, he's gone through so much. The marriage was not a happy one."

I was quite aware of it, but maintained a discreet silence.

"That is, perhaps, why Joel was arrested in the first place. Everyone knew he was with Bess only when necessary. He devoted all his energies to his work. He was not a happy man. In fact, there are those who have said they wouldn't have blamed him if he . . ."

"Please, Greta, I don't wish to hear about it."

"I understand, my dear. It isn't pleasant. And I know you think highly of him."

"If I felt otherwise, I would not have accepted this position. I will state quite plainly that, just from seeing him in court, I could not and do not now believe him guilty of the murder of his wife—if she was murdered," I amended. "No one has found proof of it."

"Indeed they have not. That is why I am so

perturbed about Joel writing the memoirs of the Templeton family. Having been a Templeton, I shall be certain to be in it, and I don't like it. I don't like it one bit. And now I have something else to worry about."

"Do you wish to tell me about it?" I knew she did; so there was naught for me to do but ask.

"It's our status in this household. As you know, Frank does nothing and has no income. We are completely dependent on Joel's generosity. And after the way he spoke to us at the table tonight, I fear he shall send us both packing."

"Oh, I don't believe he will do such a thing," I said, not at all certain whether he would or not, for I had seen his anger this evening.

"You don't know him. The Templeton men are all the same. They're blustery, gruff, and headstrong. I just don't know what got into Frank this evening. He rarely even speaks at the table. You know that."

"I know."

"I'm sure it's just those memoirs Joel has been writing. It's got Frank as upset as it has me."

"But why should your husband be upset?' I asked.

"Well . . . it's just . . . just that Frank doesn't do anything. He's sensitive about it, but there's nothing he can do. He . . . he isn't strong."

I knew Greta was making an excuse for him,

because he was certainly the picture of health, and he had a ravenous appetite.

"I think you are upsetting yourself for nothing," I told her.

Even in the darkness I could see her eyes widen hopefully. "Then he has talked about us? I mean —I suppose he made out a will. After all, he was arrested for the murder of Bess and if he were again, and were tried and convicted, well . . ."

"Greta," I said coolly, "I fear you are concerned only with the welfare of you and your husband and not at all with that of your nephew."

"Oh, Lorraine, you are wrong," she said, trying quickly to change the impression I had gained. "I am very concerned about him. That is the only reason Frank and I mentioned the fact that Joel took you swimming this afternoon. We fear someone will get the wrong impression and he will be rearrested."

I smiled, not wishing to argue with the woman whose sole concern was for herself and her idle husband.

"I think," she said, her smile thin, "you've become quite fond of my nephew. You're probably even in love with him. That is why you rise so quickly to his defense."

"So far as I am concerned, I don't believe Mr. Templeton needs any defense. As for your other statement, I think it is too impudent to answer."

"Oh, I meant no offense," she said, completely unperturbed. "It's just that Celeste Bond is in love with Joel, and she happens to be an extremely jealous woman. I think it might be well for you to be wary of her."

"I assure you, Miss Bond has nothing to concern herself about."

"In any event, I'm certain Joel would not consider marriage until the murder of his wife is solved."

"If she has been murdered," I said remindfully.

"I pray she has not, for then Joel will be rearrested. Lorraine . . ." Her hand reached out and touched my shoulder impulsively. ". . . has Joel made out a will? Surely you can tell me that. I mean, has he included us in it? Will he take care of us? We have no place to go, no one else to turn to. He can't just turn us out."

"My dear Mrs. Elkin," I said, my voice echoing my disapproval, "I have told you before I will not violate the confidence of Mr. Templeton. And in view of what you have said, I am fully convinced you are not even remotely concerned as to his fate, but very concerned as to whatever provision he has made for you and your husband."

I rose, freeing myself of her grasp, and walked away. I had come out here because I had felt the need of a tranquillity that had seemed lacking in the house; however, Greta's following me and her

resultant admissions, plus the statement that I was in love with Joel, had completely unnerved me.

I was embarrassed that my feelings were so evident, particularly since Joel had said at the table that he had given me of his company this afternoon because I had no friends with whom to amuse myself. What a fool I was to have allowed myself to fall in love with him. At the moment I felt complete contempt for myself.

I found myself down by the water, and I walked along the beach in an effort to seek mental peace. The surf was quiet; yet the sound did nothing to soothe me. I dreaded returning to my room; yet I could not remain out here all night. Not that I was afraid—I welcomed the darkness and solitude. It was the house I feared.

I thought of those strange footsteps I'd heard the first night I'd spent in Templeton Hall. There had been no recurrence of them, but the nightmare I'd suffered was still well with me, for it had seemed so real. I had been helpless, and I had betrayed Joel's confidence in me. Even if it had been only a dream, I had revealed all Joel had told me. And now I knew even more! Who was the man, I wondered, who existed only in my dream, but who could make me betray Joel Templeton? Joel trusted me to the extent he wished to give me the combination to his safe so that, should anything happen to him, I could open that safe and find

there a letter addressed to me, telling me what course I was to take.

I was frightened without knowing why—frightened of a man who existed only in my dreams. I touched the area of my jaw and found that the soreness was no longer in evidence. It must have been a dream, I told myself. It had to be.

So engrossed had I become in my thoughts that I found I had moved close to the water, and the waves were lapping at my shoes. I turned and headed abruptly for the house.

I met no one on my way, nor was anyone visible when I entered the house. I felt grateful, for I feared further unpleasantness, and I hastened to regain the sanctuary of my room.

I checked the thread in my desk to make certain the drawer had not been disturbed. Satisfied it had not, I returned to my bedroom and prepared myself to sleep.

I was weary, and when I blew out my bedside lamp and stretched full length in the bed, I hoped that sleep would come quickly. Yet it did not. I found myself restless and listening for those strange footsteps. I heard the creakings of the house as it settled down for the night. A light breeze circulated through the room from the open window, bringing the perfume of the night with it. Gradually, I calmed, and as I did, all worrisome

thoughts slipped from my mind and I drifted into sleep.

Then, once again, I became aware of that choking, sweet, pungent odor. It swept all about my head, interfered with my breathing, and caused me to grow weak and lethargic. I attempted to cry out, but I could not. My arms and legs were weighted as if with iron, and my brain was in a stupor even though it remained clear. What irked me most was my inability to raise my eyelids. They seemed to be glued tightly together and would not budge.

Once again, as in the previous dreams, I felt someone lift me from the bed and carry me. Where, I knew not. Certainly not through the house and down the stairs, though there were stairs. These, however, seemed to be so narrow that my ankles and my arms kept hitting opposite walls. Then I felt a dankness, like that of some deep cellar. A few more stairs and I smelled fresh air. I could hear night insects clamoring in the distance, and the surf was a little louder than it had been. Apparently, the tide was coming in now.

Then I was lowered upon some surface that seemed neither hard nor soft. My right hand, hanging limply, scraped against the same rough surface as the first time, but something caught at it, and there was a strange feeling at the end of my

fingers that annoyed me greatly. I felt my hand lifted and freed from whatever held it; then my arm was raised and placed by my side.

I stirred and tried to cry out, but all I could do was mumble. After a moment or two, the overpowering sweetness of that perfume—or whatever it was—swirled all about me again. I could feel my limbs grow heavier and heavier, and any will to resist disappeared.

"Lorraine . . ." a voice, seeming to come from a great distance, reached me. It was the same voice as before.

"Can you hear me?"

"Yes," I responded dutifully.

"I am going to ask you some questions, and you must answer me truthfully. Truthfully, Lorraine. Do you understand?"

"Yes . . . yes."

"Do you know the combination to Joel's safe?"

"No."

"You must know it by now, Lorraine. I want it."

"I do not know it."

"Surely he has given it to you by now."

"No . . . I would not permit him to do so."

"You would not permit? Why not, Lorraine?"

"I'm frightened."

"Of what, Lorraine?"

"You."

"I am not going to harm you. But you must get the combination. It is important that you do so. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Because you have not done so I must prolong this and ask you many questions. Will you answer them?"

"I will," I heard myself say. I tried to stir, to escape this dream-person, but my body would not respond.

"Joel spoke of Bess, did he not?"

"Yes."

"Has he told you where she is?"

"No."

"Does he know?"

"I don't know."

I thought I was tossing and turning restlessly, but it must have been only in my mind, for I couldn't feel myself moving. It did seem that I was trying to keep myself from answering any more questions. There still remained in me some spark of stubbornness. I told myself I would answer no more questions of this dream-person.

"Lorraine," the hollow voice came again, "I asked you if he knew where Bess is."

I remained mute. Someone shook me. It was the oddest sensation, because there was no feeling attached to it. Like the slap during the first dream, I felt it, but there was no sensation of pain.

"Lorraine," the voice came again, "you must answer me. You must tell me where Bess is."

If I could have bitten off my tongue I would have done so, but somehow I managed to remain mute.

"Shall I tell you why you will not answer me?" the voice asked. "You are in love with him. Isn't that true, Lorraine? Isn't it?"

"Yes," I said dutifully.

"Has he expressed his love for you?"

"No," I replied.

"He is a murderer. How could you love a man who murdered his wife?"

"He . . . did . . . not," I said, as stolidly as I was able. I knew my voice was no more than a monotone, and I wished this part of the nightmare would end, for I was tired of this endless questioning and the mental exertion it took not to answer. All dreams are but a few moments in duration, I had been told. Why did this one not end then? Perhaps I could make it end. All I had to do was awaken. Just open my eyes . . . I made the effort to raise my lids, but they would not open.

The voice persisted. "You are much too young and beautiful to die, Lorraine. He will kill you. The Templetons are ruthless. They destroy. They are incapable of love."

I said, "No!" quite as stoutly as I was able, which was, perhaps, no stronger than a whisper.

"What did he dictate to you?"

"Bess . . . about Bess. . . ." I could no longer fight this dream-person.

"What about her?"

"Someone . . . took her away. Someone else . . . killed her . . . someone among her friends. . . ."

"Who? Tell me who?"

"I do not know."

"Joel knows."

"Not yet. But he will. He is searching."

"But she may not be dead, Lorraine."

"She is dead," I said.

"Then where is her body? Joel knows. He doesn't need to search. He told you. Because he trusts you, he told you."

"He . . . did . . . not. . . ." I said. I was growing very tired. I began to feel a twinge of pain. It seemed to be in one of the fingers of my right hand. I think I moaned softly and did my best to move the hand. Perhaps I did; I wasn't sure. I wanted to get up on my feet and run—run and shout for help, because I was in mortal danger. I knew it, but I couldn't move. I was chained, held down. This dream-person was evil. I must warn Joel.

There were no more questions then. I experienced a number of strange sensations. I was lifted and carried again, and then I was cradled. There

was no other word to describe it. I was a baby once more and in a cradle that moved ever so gently to and fro, as if I rode on a cushion of air. I felt cold, however. I wanted to draw up the blanket, but I couldn't move my arms; so I just lay there and shivered.

The rocking sensation seemed to increase after a while. I began to dislike it, and I wished I would awaken. Presently the coldness seemed to be gone, but the motion remained. I thought this was the longest dream I'd ever experienced.

Then there was too much light. It burned through my eyelids, and I wanted to raise my arms to cover my face, but again there was no response. The light grew painfully brighter, and finally, through the greatest possible effort, I managed to open my eyes. Instantly I almost went blind, for the sunlight was burning down on my face.

I couldn't imagine where I was or if the dream had ended. I closed my eyes again and lay quietly while my body seemed to rock pleasantly. I could hear the lap of water. But I was quite uncomfortable; so I tried to turn my head so that I would not be looking at the sky when I raised my lids once more. This I managed to do, and upon opening my eyes, I was staring at what seemed to be some sort of wooden bench.

I could feel the lethargy leaving my body. I managed to get one elbow under me and raise up

slightly. Then I relaxed and lay back, for I felt I was still dreaming. Otherwise, how could I be on the water, in a dory, all by myself?

But gradually I knew that I was. The dream had come to an end, and somehow I'd been put aboard a boat and cast adrift. I slowly turned over, thoroughly frightened now, knowing I was alone somewhere on the ocean. Was all this some form of madness? Had I sleepwalked in my efforts to escape the horrible nightmare, the second one I'd undergone since I'd come to Templeton Hall? Had I got into this boat myself and cast it adrift on the waters? The thought was preposterous. Supporting myself on the palms of my hands, I raised myself up again. In the distance I could see land, but it seemed very far away.

My right hand gave me twinges of pain, and I turned my attention to it. Examining it, I discovered that deep in the forefinger was a splinter of wood, dyed with dried blood. I grasped it with my other hand, and, setting my teeth hard, I worried the sliver free. Some blood flowed, and I noticed more of it on my blanket.

Blanket? I was certain this was from my bed. I sat upright, trying to puzzle this out, yet realizing there wasn't time for that. What I must do was get back to shore. I looked for the oars; there were none. The boat was being carried out to sea by the tide, and I had no way of getting it back. I knew,

from my brief swimming experience with Joel, that I was quite incapable of swimming back.

Panic such as I had never known came over me then. There was simply no way out of this for me and no hope of rescue. I scanned the ocean in all directions in the forlorn hope that I had been seen, but nothing was moving.

I lay back, covering my face with a part of the blanket to ward off painful sunburn, and tried to be calm. This was no time to try to determine how I had got here, nor how those two nightmares had come about. That could come later—if I lived.

I knew the fallacy of hoping I could shout loud enough to be heard. I did make up my mind that should any sort of craft come into view, I was going to stand and wave the blanket. But the hope was a forlorn one. I lay huddled against the bottom of the craft, lucky only in that the sea was very calm. I wished, however, that the sunlight was not quite so strong.

My wits were returning and that awful lethargy was leaving me rapidly. I could think well, but my thoughts were only about Templeton Hall. What sort of monstrous place was it?

Those two experiences which I had classified as nightmares couldn't have been. Especially the second one, for if it had been a dream, how had I got in this boat and out on the ocean? I hadn't sleepwalked! I recalled the sensation of having been

carried. Of course—someone had carried me from my bedroom, questioned me, and set me adrift. But why? Then I remembered the hollow voice and the questions. My sore finger! And my painful jaw! *I had been struck a blow!* It had not been a dream. Neither before, nor last night. *It had all happened!*

Someone was frightened! Someone feared that Joel knew the answer to Bess's disappearance. Did he? Perhaps. There were times during his dictation when I had felt that he was being evasive, that he knew more than he was stating. This person boded ill for Joel, but would I ever be in a position to warn him? Somehow, I had to. I must get back to land.

I uncovered my head to look once again toward land. It seemed fainter than ever. I was still drifting straight out to sea. I lay down again. I wondered if I might use my hands as paddles and rejected the idea as not even being worth trying.

My only hope was that I would soon be missed and they would begin looking for me. How I'd be seen way out here I had no idea, but at least they'd be searching, and something might lead them to the beach. Perhaps they would find this dory missing, and surely Joel would realize that, with both me and the dory missing, I must be somewhere at sea.

I thought of the voice that had asked all those

questions, and I tried to identify it, but I was quite sure I'd never before heard it. I remembered that it had a hollow sound. I also recalled believing, from what had been said during my first supposed nightmare, that there might have been two people present, but I wasn't sure of that.

I raised myself again. I was a mere speck, miles from shore now, and despair filled me. My situation was hopeless. I thought of Judge Gaylord and my deceased parents, but most of all, I thought of Joel, whom I would never see again.

ELEVEN/

WHEN MY tears had spent themselves, I wrapped the blanket around me, to give me further protection from the sun, and settled myself onto the seat. I was able to think rationally once again, and I told myself that I would pretend someone was coming to rescue me. If I believed it hard enough, perhaps it would happen. I also prayed that it would.

I believe no more than a half hour had passed —though it seemed like a day—when I saw the high mast of the schooner, at first only a blur and then so small an image that I scarcely dared to trust my vision. But then, my spirits soared, for I saw it coming toward me at a fast clip, and before long, I recognized it. It was Joel's ship. I stood up and attempted to wave the blanket, but its weight was too much, and I sent the flimsy dory to rocking. I resumed my seat cautiously, for with rescue so close, I didn't wish to be tossed from the boat and drown.

But my heart soared, for I knew I would be rescued. Joel had found me. Relief flowed over me with a comforting warmth, and I wrapped the blanket around me again, covering my nightdress as much as possible.

In a short time, he had maneuvered alongside. "Stay just as you are," he called. "I'll come get you. Just catch this rope and tie it to the dory."

He threw the rope, which I managed to seize and make fast. Joel watched me, then dived overside and came up alongside the dory. He grasped the side of it, then paddled the craft closer to the schooner, and down its port side to where a rope ladder had been dropped.

"We're going up the ladder now; don't be frightened."

"I'm not, with you here, Joel. Thank God you came."

"We'll talk when we get aboard."

I nodded, gripped the ladder, and cautiously made my way up it. Joel followed, and I felt no fear. At the top, he boosted me over the rail, then clambered over, himself. I was trembling from my exertions, and he placed an arm around me and led me over to a chair where I sat down. He placed the blanket around my shoulders, and I gathered it about me.

"What time is it?" I asked. It was an incongruous question in view of what I had been through, but it was almost as if a reaction were settling in.

My emotions were a mixture of relief and exhaustion, which Joel seemed to sense, for he took a chair opposite me and lightly grasped both my hands in his. I knew he was waiting for me to speak, and after a while I looked at him and managed a smile.

"Thank you for coming to my rescue," I said. "How did you know I was missing?"

"Mrs. Davis told me you were not in your room," he said. "I searched the house, then went down to the beach, where I noticed that the dory was gone. I could see nothing at sea; so I hastened back to the house and went upstairs, where we have a spyglass set up in the attic. With it, I was able to pick out the dory with you in it. I left immediately."

"Thank God you did."

"What ever possessed you to take the dory at night?"

"But I didn't!" I exclaimed, amazed that he would think me capable of such foolishness.

"Then what were you doing at sea without any oars?"

"I fear it's rather a long story. One that may tax your credulity."

Joel regarded me with concern. "Tell me this —did you sleepwalk?"

"No!" I exclaimed. "I've never done that in my life. However, when I awakened and found my-

self in the dory, for a moment or two, I wondered if I had."

"Then just what is the explanation to all this?"

"I don't know. I only know that whoever placed me in that dory meant for me to die."

"Whoever placed you there?" Joel asked, his brow furrowed in puzzlement.

"Joel, this story will take a little while in the telling. I should have told you before, but I hesitated for fear you might think I was a fanciful creature."

"I have no such thoughts about you, and I am most impatient to hear you out," he assured me.

"Thank you," I said. "It began three nights ago with what I thought to be a nightmare. That is why I disdained telling you about it. I couldn't believe it myself; yet it seemed so real that I was frightened, even when I awakened the next morning. If you recall, I told you I was troubled with nightmares, but always before, they had concerned a runaway horse in pursuit of me. They were the result of my having seen my mother run down."

He nodded understandingly.

"However," I went on, "what I thought to be a dream occurred the evening of the day you dictated to me. I know I was deep in sleep when I became aware of a strong, sweet odor, very overpowering, like that of a tropical flower. Then I

had an awareness of being lifted and carried from the house and brought to a strange place. Then I was placed on a table or a kind of bed and a man's voice—it sounded very hollow, as if it came from a great distance—started to ask me questions about you. He wanted to know what you had dictated. He also wished me to give him the combination to your safe."

"Did you answer those questions?"

My eyes lowered in embarrassment. "I must confess I did. I was helpless to resist, though I did try. The first time, I remembered hearing two voices after I heard what seemed to be a blow struck with the flat of the hand. The second voice said something like, 'You didn't have to do that.' The following morning I had a sore jaw, though I attributed it to having slept on it. However, after last night, I do believe I was struck a blow, and that was what caused my jaw to be so painful."

"What happened last night?"

"It was almost identical to what happened the first time. The strong, sweetish, overpowering odor. Then the sensation of being carried down stairs, with walls on both sides of me, for my arms and legs bumped and rubbed against them. The smell of fresh air, followed by being taken somewhere and placed on a bed or table, and once again the questions and the urging to reveal the combination of the safe."

"So that's why you didn't want the combination."

I nodded. "Even though I believed it to be but a dream that first time, I feared the dream-person who kept asking those questions over and over again, for I was helpless to resist."

"Don't feel ashamed. You couldn't help revealing what you did."

"I realize that now, though the knowledge makes it no easier to know I betrayed you. But I have proof of the reality of what I went through."

"What kind of proof?" Joel asked.

I showed him the small cut in the second finger of my right hand. "Last night, my right hand was dangling, and I managed to get a sliver in the second finger. At the time, I knew my finger had caught on something; yet I felt no pain. But upon awakening this morning, I saw the wood still imbedded in my finger. It was blood-stained, and I managed to pull it out, but you can see I speak the truth."

"My dear, I never doubted you," Joel said softly. He took my hand, raised it to his lips, and kissed the bruise.

I was so startled at his gesture that I stared at him in foolish amazement.

"I wish I had my hands on whoever was responsible for doing this to you. I'd throttle him." His voice was charged with emotion, and anger was clearly revealed in his face.

"Do you have any suspicions?" I asked.

"Yes, but I cannot voice them, for I must have proof. However, my main concern is your safety. You must leave Templeton Hall immediately."

My eyes widened in shock at his suggestion, for, fearful though I was, I had no wish to leave Joel Templeton. I gloried in merely being in his presence, and I feared for his safety as much as he now assured me he feared for mine.

"I cannot leave you, Joel. I will not. Let me remain and help you solve the mystery of the disappearance of your wife."

"That is something I must do myself," he said stubbornly.

"Then I beg of you to allow me to stay. I need the work, and I am not afraid, now that I know there are humans who did this to me. I was fearful of the nightmares."

"Humans are far more dangerous than figments of the mind," Joel reminded me.

"I know, but now that I have an awareness of these people, whoever they are, I will be on guard. I will keep my doors locked."

"Do you think they carried you through the house to the outside?" Joel asked wryly.

"No," I assured him. "Though I don't know how they gained entrance to my room. I did not, however, lock my door; so it would not be difficult for them to come for me. I am only puzzled as to how they were able to compel me to answer them.

For answer them I did, and I had a complete awareness of it."

"I can explain that to you," Joel said.

"Then pray do and set my mind at rest," I pleaded.

"There are drugs made from flowers and leaves which, burned properly, create fumes resulting in a numbing paralysis of the body, though not of the mind. They rob the will of strength as well. I believe you were subjected to fumes from the burning of such plants. And I do recall that every window in your room was wide open. Mrs. Davis commented upon that. They made certain to air the room of the sweet-smelling smoke."

"But, Joel, who could have done such a thing?"

"That is the easiest of all questions to answer. Captain Walt Hoyt. The man my father broke and beached, who has lived only to get his revenge, even though we have taken care of him most of his life."

"A sailor would visit strange ports where such drugs might be had," I reasoned.

"Captain Walt used to make it a habit to visit such places and seek out the people who would teach him how to use all manner of drugs and fetishes. Had you told me about this the first time it happened . . . No—no, I would have thought it part of a dream just as you did."

"Is Captain Hoyt the culprit?"

"He undoubtedly had a hand in it, because you

were drugged. I doubt he is intelligent enough to carry out a large-scale plot. Was it his voice that asked the questions?"

"I don't know. The voice seemed hollow, as if it came from a great distance."

"Disguised, no doubt, by speaking through a tube," Joel said drily.

"However, there was a second voice, which was not disguised, but which I could not identify."

"Strange. Anyone who selected Walt to work with him on a matter such as this must be somewhat foolish, for Walt would talk about it one day —or spoil the whole thing by some independent action of his own."

"Joel, what worries me the most is why I was set adrift in that dory. Certainly it was an attempt to murder me."

"Yes, I agree. A crude one and not well thought out, but certainly a try at murder. Captain Walt's work, no doubt. He likely hoped you would die of thirst or sunburn or fall into the water."

I shuddered and, despite the warmth of the day, drew the blanket closer around me. "Can you tell me more of what you're trying to do? Now that my life also seems to be in jeopardy, I do believe I have a right to know."

"For the moment," he said, "trust me. The less you know, the less danger you'll be in. Are you certain now that you wish to remain at the Hall?"

"Quite certain," I replied.

"In that case, I suggest you go below. You know the closet that holds my wife's dresses. You will find under-garments in one of the drawers. Please hurry. We must return before they send others in search of us."

I went below and had no difficulty in finding suitable raiment. Mrs. Templeton's dress may have been a little large around the waist for me, but I was grateful for it. There was even a comb and brush, though I did not take the time to use them. I knew Joel was impatient to return, and I had no wish to delay him further.

I returned to the deck, where Joel awaited me. He approached me and without further ado, said, "Now that you are suitably garbed, I can kiss you."

He took me in his arms, and his lips touched mine in an embrace that was both tender and fervent. Once again, I knew the agony of loving a man whose wife had not even been proved dead. Yet I could not fight it. I had no will to resist him, for I loved him. He had saved my life. My arms went around his neck as I gave myself to the ecstasy of the moment, wishing it might never end.

When he released me, his eyes regarded me tenderly as he said, his voice husky, "I was frantic when I could not find you at the Hall."

My eyes caressed his face as I replied, "Just a few moments ago I was filled with despair as the thought of never seeing you again filled my mind."

"I love you, Lorraine," he said. "I never meant to say that to any woman. But I believe I loved you from the moment you brought me that glass of water in the courtroom."

"Oh Joel, my beloved Joel," I cried in anguish. "We must not speak of love. I have no right to be in your arms, to feel the touch of your lips, to know such wonder in the closeness of you."

"We have every right, for we love each other," he stated forcefully.

"No, Joel," I replied. "I have grown to love you in the short time I have known you, and yet I knew all the time it was wrong, and I have honestly tried to fight the emotion I feel for you."

His hands cupped my face. "You are a dear, warm-hearted person, Lorraine. I shan't force my attentions on you again until I know I have the right."

"That is how I wish it," I replied.

He bent, and his lips brushed mine in the faintest kiss. I stepped back, for I had meant what I said. A smile, almost of amusement, touched his lips. Then he turned his back on me and prepared to pilot the boat back to shore.

TWELVE/

When we reached the dock, Philip was there, and he helped to tie up the craft when Joel threw him a line. With the schooner snug, we went ashore. I was conscious of my hair falling loosely to my waist and my bare feet, for Mrs. Templeton's shoes were much too large for me. So I merely spoke a greeting to Philip and made my way to the house. I knew Joel would do the explaining.

Mrs. Davis was in the reception hall when I entered, and she eyed me with stern disapproval. "Serves you right," she said. "Going out in a boat when you know naught of them. Could've been drowned. I hope it's been a lesson to you."

"It has, Mrs. Davis," I assured her with a smile. "It really has. I haven't breakfasted so will you please have a tray sent up to my room?"

She gave me an indignant look, then clasped her hands across her stomach, turned, and walked away, starchily correct and completely disapproving.

I went upstairs to my little office and checked the desk. As I feared, it had been tampered with. I went into the bathroom, cleaned the injury to my finger, and performed my ablutions. Then I dressed and put up my hair. I had just finished when a maid brought in my tray. She set it on a table by the window, and I sat down to enjoy a late breakfast.

I discovered I was ravenous, and I ate the melon, eggs, bacon, and toast with a relish. When there wasn't a morsel of food remaining, I went downstairs.

Both Philip and Joel were in the library. They rose, and Philip escorted me to a chair.

"Joel has just told me he believes Captain Walt set you adrift. If that is so, I think he should be promptly apprehended and put off the estate before he can do any further mischief."

"I'm of the same opinion," Joel said, "and I think we should waste no time in doing so."

"May I go?" I asked. "I would like to inspect Captain Hoyt's cottage."

"It may be unpleasant," Joel said. "I don't intend to deal lightly with that scoundrel."

"I think she should be allowed to go, Joel," Philip said. "When she stands face to face with the old man, it might just be too much for him."

"I doubt anything could soften that old salt," Joel said drily. "However, if you wish to come, Lorraine, you may."

But Captain Hoyt wasn't at his little cottage. We entered, and after going through the little parlor, I found myself in a bedroom. There was a cot in it, with a very hard spring; it was covered with a rough blanket. The floor was unfinished wood. I knelt beside the cot and peered alongside it. That was where I saw the positive proof that this was where I had been taken for the mysterious questioning. For there was a definite bloodstain on the floor where my finger had encountered that sharp sliver of wood. I called Joel over and showed it to him.

"Now, we know for sure," he said. "Where is that scoundrel?"

We began to search for him, but he was nowhere in sight. Joel and Philip parted to cover more of the estate, while I hurried back to the house to question everyone as to whether or not Captain Walt had been seen this morning.

"Neither hide nor hair of him," Mrs. Davis said in her imperious manner. "There's chores he was supposed to do this morning, and they're still undone. I'll have something to say to him."

"Does he ever have anyone come visit him at his cottage?" I asked.

"Him?" she sniffed. "He ain't had a friend long's I've known him. Grumbles so much and complains about everything so often he couldn't keep one long. Far's I know, never's been a soul to see the man—and no wonder."

The other servants, some of whom had been here a long time, seemed to agree with Mrs. Davis. Captain Walter Hoyt had never had a visitor to their knowledge. But someone had been with him, for the more I thought about it, the more certain I was that it had not been the Captain's rough, crude voice I'd heard in that fantastic stupor I'd thought to be a nightmare.

I left the house and sought out Joel, finding him at Captain Hoyt's cottage. He was sorely puzzled. "I've looked through his cottage again, and if he's run off, he took nothing with him. No horses are missing either, and certainly he wasn't a man to mind stealing a horse and rig if it suited his purpose."

"Could he have gone by sea?" I asked.

"Not unless he had a boat of some kind hidden close by. Every craft is accounted for. No—he must still be in the vicinity; but where . . . ?"

Just then, the sound of Philip's voice, shouting Joel's name, came to us.

Joel turned and eyed a stand of white oaks, well to the south of the estate proper. Apparently, that was where his voice was coming from. I started in that direction, but Joel reached out and took a light but firm hold of my arm.

"No," he said. "You're not to go there."

"But Philip is calling. He must have found Captain Hoyt."

"I daresay he has, and you'd best remain a safe distance from the oaks."

I was clearly puzzled and a little irked with Joel, but before I could give voice to my feelings, Philip emerged from the grove. He was breathless when he reached us.

"Don't go in there," he said, addressing me. "It's . . . nothing for you . . . to see." His eyes flicked to Joel. "Captain Walt . . . hung himself."

"Stay with Lorraine," Joel said to Philip

My hands covered my mouth as if to still the cry of protest I wanted to make. What Captain Hoyt had done to me was horrible, but still, it was no reason for him to take his own life, and that, obviously, was what he had done. Obviously, he had seen Joel go out with his schooner and return with me on board. He knew then that he would be apprehended, and he couldn't face the consequences.

"Do you wish to go back to the house?" Philip asked, regarding me with concern.

"No, I'll wait here for Joel," I said, my eyes on the grove into which he had disappeared. "There was no need for Captain Hoyt to have done such a thing. Yet why did he try to do away with me in the first place?"

"Perhaps because he knew that, through you, he could hurt Joel the most," Philip replied quietly.

My glance flicked to Philip. "But why should he . . . ?"

I never finished the sentence, for Philip's smile was bittersweet as he said, "Why, indeed? Don't try to fool me, Lorraine. I know you're in love with Joel and he with you, as well. It shows in your faces."

I felt my features turn crimson at his bluntness. "I will not deny it, Philip, but I wish you to know that we are quite aware that Mrs. Templeton's body has not yet been found. Therefore, so far as we are both concerned, he is still a married man."

"One could never have regarded him as married to Bess. It really wasn't a marriage. She wouldn't allow it to be."

"Please, Philip, I don't want to hear about it."

"I'm not betraying a confidence. It's really no secret."

"Be that as it may, I don't wish to discuss it."

"Very well," Philip acquiesced. "If I thought I had a chance with you, I would search to the ends of the earth in the hope of finding Bess Templeton alive. I would like to think she left in a fit of pique. She was ever thinking up ways of deviling Joel. She made his life a hell on earth."

"I think his life has been that since her disappearance," I said. "If she is dead, I don't believe Joel had a hand in it. But whoever did certainly wished that he be blamed and made to pay the penalty for the murder. But a few bones, along

with some of her jewelry, weren't sufficient evidence to hold him for murder, thank God. Particularly when the bones were discovered to be those of a male. Obviously, the person who used this horrible scheme didn't know there was a difference."

"Quite obviously," Philip admitted. "And may I state that I agree wholeheartedly with your logic. I don't believe Joel killed her. I'm not even sure she's dead."

We had no opportunity to discuss the matter further, for Joel returned from the grove, his face ashen, his steps lagging. He shook his head sorrowfully.

"The unfortunate man must have seen me rescue you and realized he had failed in his efforts to do away with you and would likely be arrested," Joel said, his reasoning identical with mine. "I've pitied him all these years because my father was harsh with him—perhaps too severe—but to have it end like this . . ."

Philip said, "One of us had best go to the village for help. I'll leave at once if you wish, Joel."

"I would appreciate it," Joel said. "Philip, did your father arrive with you?"

"No . . . he's reluctant to leave New York because of all the work."

"Of course. I have been remiss. I shouldn't have remained away so long, thereby leaving all the responsibility on his shoulders. Tomorrow, I'll

sail the schooner to the city and give him a hand. It's the fastest way to getting there. Do you wish to come, Lorraine, or will you remain here?"

"I'll stay here, Joel. I have my notes to typewrite."

"Good girl." For some reason, Joel seemed relieved. "Don't you think you had better return to the Hall and get some rest?"

Did he wish to be rid of me? I wondered. He was sending Philip off on a necessary errand. Now he'd turned his attention to me.

"I feel no need for it," I said. "I would rather remain out of doors, at least for a while."

"You'd better get going, Philip," Joel said. For some reason he seemed anxious to get Philip out of the way.

"So I had," Philip agreed. "I'll return as soon as possible."

He hurried off in the direction of the stables. Joel and I strolled about the grounds in silence until we heard the hurried hoofbeats of a horse and caught a glimpse of the rig driven by Philip as he hastened on his errand.

Joel said, "I'd like to make a more thorough examination of Captain Walt's cottage."

"May I come with you?" I asked.

"Of course," he replied.

We returned to the cottage and Joel pushed open the door. I went inside, taking note this time of the cleanliness and order in which Cap-

tain Hoyt had kept his home. On tables and on the mantel was mute evidence of his love of carving. There were varied pieces, but nowhere did I see the skull that he'd thrown at my feet. However, when I went into the bedroom this time, I noticed it in the exact center of the bureau. It was scarcely a fitting decoration, and I shuddered inwardly as I regarded it.

Joel started a search of the drawers. In one, tucked under some apparel, he found an old leather pouch. Joel opened it, and when he loosened the cord, a stack of bills was evident. Joel frowned as he removed them and started to count them.

"Over two thousand dollars. It's possible Walt saved this much through the years. However, this money doesn't seem to have been hoarded. It's much too new."

"What do you mean, Joel?" I asked with growing apprehension.

"I'm of the inclination that Walt was paid by someone. Just what he did to earn this amount, I cannot imagine. However, it proves one thing. He is not the only one involved in this. But then, he never was clever. He was too filled with hate to think in a straight line."

I sighed. "That means danger continues to lurk at Templeton Hall."

"It does, and I still think it might be a good idea if you left with me."

"No, Joel," I said firmly. "I'm as anxious to solve the mysterious disappearance of your wife as you."

"Thank you, my dear. Your courage is admirable, and I will confess I would like someone I can trust to be present here during my brief absence."

He opened a closet door, searched it, and from a shelf, took down a brown earthenware jug. He removed the lid and sniffed of the contents, then extended the jug toward me.

"Is this odor familiar to you?"

I inhaled delicately and stepped back, aghast. "It's the same as that overpoweringly sweet substance I smelled when I thought I was having nightmares."

"They were no nightmares, Lorraine. Here is the proof. This is a powerful drug—it's used in Jamaica and can put a man to sleep in moments. Walt must have had this for a long time, for the petals and leaves are dry as dust. It's a lovely flower, but even the petals are toxic."

"Please, Joel, I want to get out of here."

"Of course." He took the jug with him, and we left the house.

We walked down to the water and out to the dock. There, Joel tossed the contents of the jug into the lapping waves and we watched as the insidious leaves were picked up and devoured by the water.

"You need have no more fear of that," Joel said.

"I'm grateful to you for finding it," I said, "for the mystery is now ended. I know I was drugged, taken from my room, and questioned in Captain Hoyt's cottage."

"Yes," Joel agreed. "Later, you were to be brought back to your room by Walt, but he disobeyed whoever gave the order. He was so filled with idea of revenge against my father and me, he decided to put you in the dory with the idea that you would be carried out to sea by the tide. He was a shrewd old man, and he undoubtedly knew we were attracted to one another. Perhaps he watched us when we took a swim."

"That seems a long while ago," I said wryly. "But I shall remember it always."

Joel smiled, then sobered. "Tell me, did you see Greta or Frank when you went to the house?"

"No," I replied. "I questioned Mrs. Davis and the servants, but there was no evidence of your aunt or uncle. Nor did I even give a thought to them."

"They remain so much to themselves, it's little wonder. However, I shall talk to them."

"Surely you don't suspect them," I said. "I can't believe they would wish me ill."

"My dear, no one wished to do away with you except Captain Walt," Joel assured me. "No one wishes you ill. They're probably morbidly curious

as to what I have been dictating to you, but as for harming you, I'm sure neither Greta or Frank nor Mrs. Davis would do such a thing."

"That's gratifying to hear."

"However, don't be misled by Aunt Greta's seemingly endless and senseless chatter. She's shrewd, as is her husband. And crafty, too; but they would scarcely be a party to murder. I'm thinking of Bess when I say that."

"Did your wife like them?"

"No. She wanted them out of the house, but I wouldn't permit it."

"I'm glad you didn't. It would have been cruel, for they are both weak creatures and could never make their way in this modern world."

"I daresay you're right, but they need have no fear on that score so long as they behave themselves."

"I wish I could have recognized the voice in Captain Hoyt's cottage," I said.

"Then you're certain there was another man in the cottage."

"Positive," I said. "But the voice was one I'd never heard before."

"Perhaps the effects of the drug made the voice seem different," Joel cautioned me. "We must consider that."

"But I have, Joel. I do recall that I gave an unsatisfactory answer and someone slapped me. I did have a sore jaw to prove it. My brain was dulled by

the effects of the drug, but I do remember that."

"Then we must consider this from another viewpoint," Joel said thoughtfully. "This other man the unknown—would not have desired your death, for sooner or later you would have told him what he wished to know. He had to find out how close to the truth I was getting in the memoirs I dictated each day."

"But I was set adrift in the dory, and I could very easily have died," I reminded him.

"True. Therefore, it seems more than likely that Walt set you adrift on his own."

"What do you mean by that?" I asked, eyeing him sharply.

Joel's lips compressed grimly a moment before he spoke. "My dear, just this. Walt didn't hang himself. He was murdered—by the man whose order he disobeyed. The man who commanded him to carry you safely back to your room. Apparently this man didn't know just how ornery Walt was. Or thought because he had paid Walt a large sum of money to do his bidding, Walt would act the part of the obedient servant."

"Joel," I asked, "if your wife has been murdered, do you suppose Captain Hoyt was paid that sum of money to do it?"

"I don't know," Joel answered, and I knew he was telling me the truth.

"Oh, Joel, when will this horrible business stop?"

"Soon, I hope. But I fear not until we have evidence of what happened to Bess. I don't know the identity of the person who sought the information from you. My suspicions are too vague to voice. However, I must leave this and go to New York tomorrow, but I shall return by evening. My sloop is very fast."

"I am grateful for that," I told him. "I shall have a busy day typing my notes. And I feel I shall sleep in peace with no more of those dreadful nightmares, now that you have found and disposed of the substance that rendered me in a state of stupor, yet forced me to answer questions to betray you. I knew I was doing it: I fought against it; yet I was helpless."

"I understand," Joel said kindly. "And now let us return to the house, for I wish to give you the combination to the safe. It is merely a precaution —for I feel nothing will happen to me—yet I would be lax not to take it."

We turned our steps in the direction of the Hall, and Joel reached for my hand and held it in his as we walked along.

"Within the safe is a sealed envelope," he said. "It contains full instructions and legal papers as to what orders I wish you to carry out in the event of my death or my disappearance."

"Oh, Joel," I said, "surely you don't think that something dire . . ."

"Hush, my dear," he said reassuringly. "I am merely being practical."

"Then I shall be practical also," I replied, "and pray that I shall not be called upon to open the safe."

"I will join you in that prayer," he said, sounding highly gratified.

THIRTEEN/

DESPITE THE TRAGIC event of the day, I managed to sleep well, for my ordeal the night before had left me exhausted. And it had been followed by the discovery of Captain Hoyt's body. Afterward, there had been the many questions asked by the police when Philip returned with them and the medical examiner.

Joel told them that Captain Hoyt had been a recluse, performing his duties faithfully but keeping strictly to himself. Joel also related that the Captain had spent his lifetime brooding over having been beached because of carelessness, and apparently it had affected his mind to the extent that he had finally taken his life.

Before their arrival, Joel and I had discussed the situation and decided not to mention my experience of the night before. We didn't know whether or not Philip might reveal it to the police, but he

had not, for their questions concerned only Captain Hoyt.

Joel and I were fearful that, should the police learn of what had happened to me and suspect that Captain Hoyt had met with foul play, it might serve to reopen the case of the disappearance of Mrs. Templeton and Joel might once again be arrested. So long as he was free, he could continue to write his memoirs, to seek out who the mysterious person was who had been with Captain Hoyt and who was, obviously, the murderer of the old man and, no doubt, of Mrs. Templeton. Therefore, we remained silent regarding the deed the old man had perpetrated on me last night.

I awoke early and felt alert and rested. I dressed hurriedly and went downstairs, eager to see Joel off, but he was already gone.

"He left at the crack of dawn," Mrs. Davis told me. "He's no lie-abed. You have to get up mighty early to keep up with him."

I ate a solitary breakfast, for neither Frank nor Greta nor Philip put in an appearance. Then, before I began my day's typewriting, I decided to take a stroll on the estate. I avoided Captain Hoyt's cottage and turned my steps toward the beach, for I wished no grim reminder of the day before.

I looked up over the water, thinking of the events of yesterday, and breathed a prayer that Joel would have a safe voyage. I had no reason to

feel any fear, for the sea was calm and I knew that he was a skilled sailor who had come of generations of seagoing men.

I was looking forward to Joel's return. He had said he would surely be here by nightfall. I turned back to the house and caught a glimpse of Frank Elkin taking a walk. He wore a gray-checked cap and a long coat that seemed like very strange garb, for it was a warm day. He had a scarf tucked closely around his throat, and he looked neither to the right nor the left as he trudged along. He was a very strange man. Certainly not a friendly one, for he would have needed only to turn his head or shift his gaze the merest bit to see me. Perhaps he was even aware of my presence but chose to ignore it.

I wondered how he and Greta spent their days. They kept to their rooms, coming downstairs only for their meals.

I went to my room, entered my little office, and began my day's work. I forgot the time, becoming deeply engrossed in the memoirs I was typing. Therefore, I was quite startled when one of the maids entered, carrying a tray containing my dinner.

"Mrs. Davis thought you might be liking a bite," she said, her smile hesitant.

"Oh, I would," I replied gratefully. "I'm famished, and thank you so much for bringing it up."

"You're welcome, Miss," she said. "Will you eat here or in your bedroom?"

"This room will do," I told her. "You may set it down on the table by the window."

"It was a terrible thing that happened to poor Captain Hoyt," she said, eager for a little conversation.

"It was, indeed," I replied. "I suppose he'll be sorely missed."

"Well now, I wouldn't go so far as to say that," she told me, casting a cautious eye toward the open door. "He wasn't what you could call a friendly man."

I smiled. "I must agree with you, but it was still a tragic occurrence."

"Tragic indeed, Miss. And such a surprise. He seemed to get such enjoyment out of life just by being nasty. No one ever thought he'd see fit to do away with himself."

"I suppose not," I replied. "Tell me, what is your name?"

"Nora, Miss. And I've been here over three years. It's nice havin' you around if I may say so. You're a friendly sort, and this is a somber house. Always has been so long as I worked here. And with Mrs. Templeton done in . . ."

"No one knows that for certain," I reminded her.

"True," she replied, nonplussed. "And certainly

it was a terrible thing for the master to have been arrested for her murder. The other servants and I breathed a sigh of relief when he was released."

"I'm sure you did." It was apparent where their loyalty lay, and I knew she would never have talked so openly with me except that she regarded me as an employee.

She set the tray on the table and stepped back. "There you are, Miss, and you'd best eat it while it's hot."

"Thank you, I will. It smells delicious."

And indeed the chicken fricassee with dumplings did tempt my appetite. Nora excused herself, closing the door after her. I left the room only long enough to wash my hands, for I dared not leave the memoirs exposed to prying eyes.

It was late afternoon by the time I had finished. I gathered up my notes and the typewritten papers and brought them downstairs to the library, where I would place them in the safe. I had no difficulty in opening the safe, for I had memorized the combination, having no further fear of betraying Joel by revealing it.

When I returned to the reception hall, I sought out Mrs. Davis and asked her if Philip had been about.

"He's gone into town to see what to do about poor Captain Walt. Seems to me Walt was like one of our own and should be treated that way. But

the master's off to New York without one word about what we should do concerning the funeral."

"Mr. Templeton will return this evening," I said. "He will take care of arrangements; so I believe you need not concern yourself."

She gave a defiant toss of her head and moved on into the dining room, out of my vision. She was a very difficult woman, and I wondered how Joel tolerated her. Even if she were staying on merely to see "justice done," she might adopt a more placating attitude. However, I recalled that Joel had told me he was hoping she might shed some light on his wife's disappearance. I wondered if she did know something that accounted for her arrogant attitude.

I was about to return to my room, when I heard the pounding of hoofs as a carriage was being driven at a rapid pace toward the house. Such speed was alarming, and my brow furrowed with concern as I hastened to the door. As I opened it, Philip was coming up the stairs. He was tense, pale and so distraught he could scarcely find his voice.

"Bad news," he gasped. "I came as quickly as I could travel. The village just heard it. . . ."

"Joel?" I asked in fresh horror.

He nodded. "Joel. . . . His sloop . . . caught fire. . . ."

My whole world began to collapse around me.

I reached out and leaned against a pillar for support. Philip placed an arm around me and eased me down onto a step.

"What about Joel?" I asked, fearful of the answer, sensing what it might be.

"He hasn't been found," Philip said, his face sorrowful.

I clasped my hands tightly in my lap. I mustn't give way to hysterics, though I wanted mightily to do so. The man I loved had been lost at sea. Was that my punishment for allowing myself to become enamored of a man to whom I had no right? I dared not think about it.

"Please . . . tell me what happened," I said, in as steady a voice as I could manage.

Philip went on to explain in the kindest way he could, though there was no really kind way to describe it. "His sloop was sighted well offshore. It was burning furiously. All manner of craft set out to rescue him, but they were too late. The sloop heeled over and sank. They searched for a long time. There . . . were no signs of him. I'm truly sorry, Lorraine, for I know you loved him. As for me, I'd have lost a good friend. There is nothing more I can say."

I felt too numbed to speak, too shocked to cry. I felt as numb and helpless as I had when I'd inhaled the fumes of that fantastic drug Captain Hoyt had used on me. I had found my love only to lose

him, almost before I had grown to know him. Yet my loss was nonetheless severe, and I had to face up to it.

I turned to Philip. "Will you summon Greta and Frank and Mrs. Davis and ask them to present themselves in the parlor? I have a duty to perform."

"I will, Lorraine," Philip replied. He assisted me to my feet, and we entered the house.

I went at once to the library and crossed the room to where the safe was located. I moved the picture from the wall, and as if I had opened the safe a hundred times, my fingers dialed the combination surely and steadily.

I swung the door wide. The stack of manuscript papers, comprising the memoirs as far as I had transcribed them, lay prominently visible on one shelf. Atop them was a large envelope sealed with red wax. I took it out, saw my name on it, then closed and locked the safe.

I returned to the reception hall and heard a rider approach the house. Philip came from the parlor as the brass knocker sounded on the door. He opened it to find a messenger who handed him an envelope.

"It's for me." he told me after scanning the message. "It's from my father. I telegraphed him the news from the town and this is his reply. He states he is leaving for here at once and will arrive this

evening. You will find his shoulders broad to lean upon, Lorraine."

"Thank you, Philip," I replied calmly, "but I feel I'll have no need of them. I have been exposed to the death of loved ones before, having lost both my parents. It has undoubtedly helped me to retain my composure at this time."

"So that accounts for your courage."

"There is another reason. I fear Joel had a premonition that something might happen to him, for he instructed me to carry out certain duties. I shall now perform these duties in the presence of Frank and Greta Elkin, yourself, and Mrs. Davis. I see no need to wait for your father's arrival."

"You must follow the dictates of your conscience," Philip said, his manner understanding. "I must confess, though, I am taken by surprise to learn that Joel had a premonition of his death."

"He did not state he had," I replied, "but after I have spoken to you, you will understand that he must have had fears of some sort, for he gave me the combination of his safe before he left. Perhaps there is evil here, but I do not intend to let it flourish and feed upon Joel's death. Therefore, I must retain my senses and do that which Joel requested."

I started for the parlor, but Philip placed a restraining hand on my arm.

"Lorraine, what will you do now?"

"Exactly what Joel instructed me to do. That in the event of his death I was to open the safe immediately and take from it an envelope bearing my name, which held instructions concerning his final wishes."

"No, no—I mean your future plans. I know you've had no time to think, but—"

"Oh," I interrupted, "I have my position in Judge Hamish's court as soon as it reconvenes. I also have a flat in the city to return to. I shall find ways to occupy myself so that I shall not dwell too long upon this tragedy. As deeply as I will mourn Joel's loss, I will also be sorrowed that he never lived to solve the mystery of his wife's disappearance."

Philip nodded. "He was obsessed with the idea of it, so much that he even neglected his business in New York, necessitating my father's devoting endless hours to it. Now, of course, it will be even worse."

"Did you summon everyone?" I asked, not reminding him that that had been Joel's reason for going to New York.

"They're in the parlor. Greta and Frank—shocking though it may be for me to say—seem almost pleased. Of course, they're the legal heirs and, though I gave them no hint of the tragic news, it's almost as if they know beforehand what they are to hear. As for Mrs. Davis, she has no

idea of why she was summoned and is completely puzzled."

"Very well," I said, "let us go in so I may read the contents of this envelope."

It was as Philip had stated. Greta and Frank sat tensely, almost eagerly, on the edges of their seats. Mrs. Davis was completely mystified. Philip took a chair apart from the group, and I remained standing.

"Mr. Morgan," I said, "arrived a few moments ago with dire news. Mr. Templeton's sloop caught fire and sank. They have found no trace of him."

Mrs. Davis closed her eyes piously. "I'm sorry the master met such a fate, but the good Lord repays in His own way. Now she will lie content, rest her soul."

"If you wish to leave, Mrs. Davis, you may," I said sternly.

"I do not," she replied. "You sent for me and there must be a reason that I should be here."

"I believe there is," I replied. "But none of us knows for a certainty that Mrs. Templeton is dead."

"We don't know for a certainty the master is dead," she said sarcastically. "No one saw him drown."

I was becoming sorely vexed with the woman, for my nerves were frayed. It was only with the greatest effort I maintained a calm I was far from

feeling. I wanted, more than anything, to retire to my room and nurse my grief.

Fortunately, though it came as a surprise, Frank Elkin spoke just then, and with a good question. "How far from land did she sink? He could have swam ashore."

I looked at Philip for the answer to that. It was something I should have thought of.

"Much too far—three miles—and the sea was fairly rough," Philip said. "There is no chance. And there were no ships in the vicinity to pick him up."

"Then we must presume the poor boy as lost," Greta said in a steady voice.

"For which you're mighty glad," Mrs. Davis exclaimed, her glance venomous. "I know what you're thinking!"

Greta cast level, calm eyes on Mrs. Davis. "I do believe, Mrs. Davis, that it might be best if you are packed and ready to leave here by tomorrow morning at the latest."

"You can't give me orders," Mrs. Davis shouted again. "You have no right . . ."

"Frank and I are the rightful heirs to Templeton Hall," Greta declared complacently. "I am the only blood relation. Come, Frank, we have many plans to make. . . ."

"Just a moment." I said. "I don't know who will now own Templeton Hall, but Mr. Temple-

ton ordered me to open his safe and read the contents of an envelope if he died or vanished. I have the envelope with me, and I ask all of you to hear what Mr. Templeton's final requests are."

"Lorraine, I think you should wait until my father arrives," Philip said. "After all, he will now control about everything Joel owned—in a business way," he added quickly, as Greta cast him a stormy look.

"I shall read it now," I said. "Joel's request was that this be done immediately in case anything happened to him."

I asked Greta and Frank to examine the seals, and they were satisfied they had not been tampered with. Then I broke them, slit open the flap, and extracted another, similarly sealed envelope and a one-page document. I laid aside the sealed envelope and began to read the letter.

To Whomever This May Concern:

For certain reasons best known to myself, I have a premonition of death. At whose hand, I am not prepared to say at his writing. If I am missing, or my death be reasonably well established, then I request the following be done.

FIRST: I order that Miss Lorraine Ward, now acting as my secretary, shall be appointed sole

executor of these orders and of my estate. Her sole judgment is law, and her wishes shall be carried out as if they were my own.

SECOND: At this time, I order that my estate remain intact and under the care of the aforesaid Miss Lorraine Ward. My last will and testament is enclosed within the envelope accompanying this letter. Under no circumstance is it to be opened until five years have elapsed.

THIRD: That my interest in the Templeton Steamship Lines continue as of now without liquidation or transfer of any kind. My partner, Mr. Earl Morgan, will have control of the business, Earl Morgan, will have control of the business, but my share of all dividends and profits must be turned over to my estate. At the end of five years, the steamship lines known as The Templeton Lines will then become the sole property of Mr. Earl Morgan.

FOURTH: I do hereby stipulate that should any of the above provisions be violated in any way, my estate will then be immediately liquidated and all assets turned over for the benefit of the Seamen's Fund. The sole judge as to whether or not any clause has been violated lies with the aforesaid Miss Lorraine Ward, and her decisions shall be absolutely final. She is like-

wise empowered to make any changes with respect to Templeton Hall and its operation. In the Wall Street Branch of the Corn Bank I have established a fund for her expenses and to recompense her for acting in my behalf.

I do hereby set my hand and seal in the presence of five witnesses, all of whom will attest to my signature.

Joel Templeton.

The five witnesses were names high in the industrial and financial fields. I laid the letter down slowly and sat down bracing myself against the back of the chair. I knew why he had done this. I meant these people should also know.

"You have heard what Mr. Templeton's wishes are." I intend to carry them out, for I am as determined as he that if he was murdered, or if murder has been done on this estate or in this house, then whosoever has committed the crime shall not profit by it for at least five years. This household has been satisfactorily operated up to now and there will be no changes so far as I am concerned. Unless"—and I looked directly at Mrs. Davis—"I feel such a change would benefit Templeton Hall. I believe that is all for now, unless someone has a question."

Mrs. Davis' features were minus their belligerence. Greta and Frank looked desolate. Obviously,

the statement I had read to them had only furthered their frustrations. As for Philip, his eyes were on me and there was no determining what he was thinking.

I rose and picked up the letter. "I shall return this to the safe," I said, as I slipped it back into its envelope. "Philip, may I presume on you to the extent of driving me to the village at once?"

"Of course," he said. "I'll harness a carriage."

"Thank you," I replied, then turned and left the room, with Philip following.

I went immediately to the library, opened the safe, and placed nothing but the empty outer envelope in it. I spun the dial, swung the picture back into place, and went to the desk, where I found letter paper. I wrote a brief note of explanation to Judge Hamish Gaylord, addressed an envelope to him, and placed my note along with Joel's letter in it. I affixed a stamp, concealed the envelope in my dress pocket, and went upstairs for a hat and gloves.

I was amazed that I could attain such an outward calm when, inside, my heart felt crushed with the loss of my beloved Joel. I wondered if he had met with foul play. If so, I knew for a certainty that I would never learn who the culprit was. I was ill-equipped to carry on an investigation such as Joel had been doing in an effort to discover the whereabouts of his wife—dead or alive.

I wondered if Joel had come upon enough evidence that his wife had been murdered to make the murderer fearful so that it had become necessary to dispose of Joel. If so, what better way to carry out the dire deed than to cause a fire in some way, to destroy his boat and him with it.

FOURTEEN/

I SAT stiffly erect in the carriage beside Philip, my mind on the tragedy that had just occurred. I knew I was beset with grave responsibilities, and I prayed for divine guidance so that I would be able to meet the challenge, especially with my heart so filled with grief.

Philip respected my feelings and maintained a discreet silence. However, I felt he was deserving of some explanation of my mission, though I would not reveal all.

"I wish to go to the post office, Philip," I said. "I felt it only seemly to write to Judge Hamish immediately concerning the horrible fate that has befallen Joel. The good Judge has been my guardian, and I wish him to know that I am well and safe and have certain obligations to fulfill here that will necessitate my remaining at Templeton Hall."

"Of course, Lorraine," Philip said. "It is only fitting that you do so. We shall be there in a matter of minutes."

We drove down the dusty street, which was deserted on this hot summer afternoon, and Philip drew up before a small wooden structure with only one window. He assisted me down from the carriage and even offered to mail the letter for me, but I declined, for I wished to place the envelope under register and also to provide for special delivery.

I entered the post office alone, and I was assured by a competent young clerk that Judge Gaylord might have it very late tonight, but if not, most assuredly in the early morning. I thanked him and returned to the carriage, feeling much easier in mind.

"Do you wish me to bring you elsewhere?" Philip asked.

"No, thank you, Philip. Just back to the Hall."

He turned the carriage in the direction of the estate. "I must say the envelope which Joel left contained some rather startling news, Lorraine."

"As surprising to me as to anyone else."

"I could see that as you read it. This makes you a person of considerable importance. Do you think you can cope with something as tremendous as the Templeton fortune, the estate, the steamship lines?"

"Joel trusted me," I said. "I shall endeavor to do my best."

"Well said. You will have my earnest devotion and all the help I am able to give."

"Thank you, Philip. I shall likely have need of it."

"I will also admit that I'm rather frightened for you."

I looked at him sharply. "Then you too have the thought that Joel's ship didn't just happen to catch fire."

"Lorraine, the sloop was used only for short pleasure trips or quick journeys to New York. It had no cooking equipment on board, no fuel. There was no way for it to catch fire. . . ."

"Unless it was deliberately set with some device to cause fire after the ship was well out at sea."

"I fear that those are my thoughts on the matter."

"Then all the more reason why I must remain and act in Joel's behalf. For I will never abandon his memory and I will not rest until I know what happened to him."

"Good. I'm all for that. There's going to be a great deal of trouble, however. They'll fight that letter and your appointment as executor."

"Who will fight it, Philip?"

"Frank and Greta are bound to. I may as well warn you in advance that my father won't stand for waiting five years, during which time he must assume the responsibility of managing the business, with half the profits going to Joel's estate. Papa is a most direct man, and I assure you he will not be pleasant."

"Thank you for warning me, Philip, for I will now be quite prepared for him. Somehow, that letter from Joel has given me some of the spirit and substance that was in him. If your father wishes to fight—and I assume from what you tell me, that is what he intends to do—it is his right, but it is mine to fight back, and I assure you I shall. I believe I might be in a position to destroy the Templeton ship lines if I deem Joel's order are not carried out."

"Would you do so?" Philip asked in alarm.

I stiffened. "I shall do whatever I think necessary."

"Though what I am about to say makes me unfaithful to my father, I must say I admire your spirit and hope you have everything your way."

"I wish only to be just and fair," I said, though with no lessening of my determination.

We settled down to a long silence then, for my eyes became filled with tears, and I was forced to apply my handkerchief. Still, I managed to hold my grief in control rather well, and by the time we turned into the long, straight road across the estate to the house, I was dry-eyed and prepared to cope with whatever situation should occur. That it was about to was amply attested to by the sleek horse tied up near the porch.

"That is Celeste's horse," Philip said. "She must

have heard the news, and she will not be easy to deal with."

"I have no reason to deal with her," I said. "She is not a member of this household."

I started to climbed down from the carriage without waiting for Philip's help, but he stayed me by clasping my hand.

"Please, Lorraine, you must be warned," he said. "Celeste can be an extremely difficult person when she wishes to be, and I am of the opinion that she has already been told of the state of affairs at Templeton Hall by Greta."

"I have already been the recipient of Miss Bond's venom, and I do not fear her."

"In that case, do sit long enough to allow me to leave the carriage and assist you down. This is no time for you to sprain an ankle."

"You're right, Philip," I said, relenting. "I will confess I'm confused by this shocking turn of events. And now, I know I am going to have more unpleasantness."

"Be assured there isn't the slightest doubt of it. But after watching the way you have conducted yourself since the news of Joel's misadventure—to put it mildly—I believe you are quite capable of turning any situation into your favor."

"Pray accept my thanks, not only for your confidence in me, but also for your loyalty. And now, Philip, I must face Miss Bond."

He was out of the carriage and around it in a second, and he was most gentle as he assisted me down. I entered the house alone for Philip had to take the carriage to the stables.

I was no sooner inside than Miss Bond came flying out of the parlor. For a moment, I had the horrible idea that she was going to attack me, for her arms were raised and her hands were clenched. I paused abruptly, certain my face registered my shock.

She stopped just a few inches from me, and her voice was almost a scream as she cried out. "Why did he have to leave you in charge? Who are you? A cheap nobody he employed out of pity!"

"Stop it, Miss Bond! Stop shouting at me," I said, my own voice raised.

Much to my surprise, she did and backed away from me a few steps. Obviously, she hadn't expected me to stand up to her, and her surprise left her speechless—but not for long.

"Why did he leave everything to you?" she asked, her voice rising again. "Why to you when he had a blood relative living? Why to you and not to me?"

"Mr. Templeton left me nothing but an obligation to carry out his wishes. This I intend to do, and neither you nor anyone else is going to drive me from Templeton Hall."

"We were to be married. Joel and I were going to be married, did you hear me?"

"I hear you," I replied quietly. "I should have to be quite deaf not to."

"I loved him, and I'm sure he loved me," she said. "In time, we would have been married, but I had the decency to remain away from him after his wife died."

"Is she dead, Miss Bond?" I asked quietly.

"She's gone!" she exclaimed. "She must be dead! Poor Bess . . . if she knew how Joel was taken in by you, a cheap hussy . . ."

"I don't like being called names, Miss Bond," I replied, feeling pity rather than anger for this poor creature, "but I understand your overwhelming grief and you are striking out at me, thinking I am, in some way, responsible for Joel's death."

"So you call him by his first name," she exclaimed, eyeing me with disdain.

His name had slipped out, but now that it had, I wasn't going to apologize, nor would I make any explanations to her. I couldn't tell her we had proclaimed our love for one another. I didn't wish to hurt her, or to embitter her any further. Besides, what purpose would it serve now, with Joel gone?

Then, as if she had used up what anger was in her, she broke down and started to cry. I stood there for a moment, uncertain of what to do. Then, without a thought as to whether or not she might turn on me, I went to her. I placed an arm around her and led her into the parlor and to a settee.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Greta, who had been standing inside the room, obviously listening to every word that had been spoken, slip out and head down the hall. I was too occupied with Celeste to feel any anger or resentment at the woman who had undoubtedly caused Celeste to turn on me.

"Let us not have further bitterness between us, Celeste," I said softly. "I held Joel in as great respect as you did, but he has gone now; so let us revere his memory. Nothing can be gained by our quarreling with one another."

She fumbled for her handkerchief, blew her nose, and dabbed at her eyes.

"I had no intention of remaining at the Hall once I learned the tragic news," I went on. "It was Greta who told you of Joel's last wishes, was it not?"

She nodded, still not enough in control of her emotions to speak.

"Then you know why I'm here. However, though I still consider myself an employee, I am also head of the household. I am hopeful I shall have a harmonious relationship with all concerned, and especially with you, for I know how you feel about Joel, and I can understand your great sadness."

For the first time, when she looked at me, there was neither resentment nor scorn in her eyes. She

slipped her handkerchief back in the pocket of her riding costume and turned to face me.

"How can you be so nice to me when I have been so hateful to you?" she asked.

"You were overcome with grief—not aware of what you were saying."

"Pray do not seek excuses for me," she said. "I was jealous of you when Joel was alive, for you were able to be close to him and I could not be. And when I heard the dire news and came here, Greta . . ." She looked at me, and her eyes lowered.

"I understand," I said. And well I did, knowing that Greta had undoubtedly filled her with stories which were, to put it mildly, untrue.

Celeste rose. "I must go now. Forgive me for my ungraciousness and for calling you those horrible names. I'm sorry I came."

"I'm not," I replied, standing to face her. "Perhaps, in time, we can become friends. That is, if you have the desire."

Her face brightened, and she bent forward and touched her cheek to mine. I was deeply moved by her gesture and even more so by her words when she spoke. "Lorraine, you are a very dear person, and I don't wonder Joel fell in love with you." At my look of surprise, she smiled wanly and continued. "Oh yes, I knew it the day he came over to see me. He was well acquainted with me,

and he knew I could be nasty. He also knew I loved him and always had and no doubt resented your presence at the Hall. He was perfectly right. When he spoke so highly of you, I could see in his eyes in what regard he held you, and I became deeply resentful. So much so, I taunted him about what I had done when I met you on the boat. I must return Bess's dress. I must also express my regrets for having behaved in so hateful a fashion that day."

"All of us, at some time or other," I replied, "behave in a fashion we later regret."

"I doubt you would behave thus," she said. "And I was very stupid, for all it did was to make Joel angry and cause him to hold me in contempt —which made me hate you the more. I would probably still be hating you, were he alive."

"I would gladly bear your hatred were that so," I said, feeling my loss keenly. "For since you have been so honest with me, I must be the same with you. You had a right to hate me, Celeste, for I loved Joel Templeton. I completely lost my heart to him, even though I fought it; for I knew I had no right to him. The death of his wife has never been established."

"Nonetheless, I fear she is dead," Celeste replied. "For she would never leave Templeton Hall of her own volition. She was extremely vain and inordinately proud of her position of mistress of

it. But she made Joel a poor wife. She bore him no love, yet wanted no one around him. However, the last few years of his marriage, he spent as little time at the Hall as possible. He lived only for his work, and he drove himself very hard. I saw him but little. However, I do not believe, if Bess is dead, that he murdered her."

"Nor do I," I said staunchly. "But a pity we shall never know what happened to her."

"A pity," Celeste agreed. "Joel was devoting himself to uncovering the mystery. Do you suppose he might have met with foul play?"

"I have considered that thought," I replied. "And I think it highly possible."

"We shall never know." Celeste gave a little despairing sigh, then extended her hand in a gesture of friendship. "And now, Lorraine, I must go. But I shall cherish these last few moments we spent together. I feel now we shall be friends, drawn together by our mutual loss."

"A pity it took Joel's death to do it," I replied, taking her hand between both my own. "But I am glad I have one friend to whom I may turn."

She smiled her reassurance, and I accompanied her to the door. Philip was just coming up the stairs, and he was astounded to see Celeste, as she once again bent down and touched her cheek to mine. He greeted her and nodded to me as he took her arm to lead her to her horse.

I closed the door and hastened along the hallway to the library. I was quite astounded to see both Greta and Frank, seated in chairs before the desk. Obviously, they had been waiting for me, and I suppose if I hadn't come here, they'd have summoned me. I moved around the desk and sat in the chair that had once been occupied by Joel. I sensed that there was going to be unpleasantness, and I felt I would be better able to meet it if I were seated there.

There was a bitter smile on Greta's lips as her eyes met mine. "Well, I must say you handled Celeste quite skillfully. As cleverly as you handled Joel."

"If it was your intention to cause Celeste and me to quarrel, I am pleased to say you failed, Greta," I replied.

"You seem to be well provided for, at any rate," Frank broke in.

"I am fast becoming of the opinion that you two people are as cruel as you are self-centered, thinking only of yourselves. While there is no need for me to make explanations, I will state that I had not the slightest hint that Joel had made me the executor, nor that he would order his estate to remain undivided for five years."

"What is in the will?" Frank demanded. "He told you. A man who would entrust you with this much would have told you the terms. Who benefits? You, likely, eh?"

"I have no idea what is in the will," I said.

"You're a liar," he shouted. "I intend to take this up with a lawyer. I will not allow you to sit there and dictate to me. Joel dictated to me all his life, and I was forced to take it, but it has to stop now. I will not permit it. . . . No stupid girl is going to tell me what I may or may not do, nor limit my allowance, or even curtail it. . . ."

"I do not know the terms of the will," I repeated, holding my temper with difficulty.

"I called you a liar. You are. You do know, but you won't tell because he left it all to you. What did you do to earn that . . . ?"

"Frank," Greta said sharply.

I recalled that Joel had said to watch out for Greta, that she was the shrewder of the two, and now I saw visible evidence she was. Undoubtedly, she was recalling Joel's letter and was fearful I might carry out the terms of it. And she had reason to feel consternation, for I was fast losing patience with these two, whose sole thought was of their own comfort.

"Be quiet," Frank exclaimed, casting a baleful glance at her. This was a new Frank Elkin and one I disliked more than the silent one I'd previously known. My anger was climbing rapidly.

"Frank, you're saying too much." Greta plucked at his sleeve, but he shook her off.

"I intend to see that you go to jail. What was Joel but a murdering beast anyway? Just a Tem-

pleton, and none of them ever were any good. Pretending to find out what happened to Bess when all the time—"

I said, "Mr. Elkin, you've said enough. You and your wife have lived here for many years solely on Joel's generosity and his father's before him. That is now done away with. You will prepare to leave Templeton Hall as soon as possible, and if you are not out of here within a reasonable length of time, I shall exert my authority as executor of this estate and have you put out legally."

Frank whirled to shake a finger in Greta's face. "I told you she'd be like that. She wants it all. Not even willing to share . . . and we waited so long. . . ."

"Frank, be quiet," Greta said dismally. "Be quiet; do you hear me?"

"Mr. Elkin," I broke in, "you spoke of an allowance. I had no knowledge of it before this, but whatever it is, you are hereby notified that it is cut off. I will listen to no more. Please get out of here and leave me alone."

His face turned a deep red, almost a purple, and I feared for a moment he was going to attack me, for with the venomous expression on his face. I'm sure such a thought must have crossed his mind. However, he turned and stalked out, slamming the door behind him; Greta lowered her head and began to cry. I sat silently, waiting for an end to her tears.

She finally stopped, dried her tears, and attempted a sickly smile. When she spoke, there was no venom in her voice, but rather a return of the meek manner that had been so much in evidence up to the time of Joel's death.

"My dear, forgive both of us. We are overwrought. This outburst of Frank's is a result of his long periods of silence. He just didn't realize what he was saying. Lorraine, my dear, dear girl, we are not young. True, we have lived off Joel's generosity these many years, but I am his blood relative, and there is a certain family responsibility on his part. Poor Frank has never been able to do anything successfully."

I wondered if he had ever tried, but I remained silent for fear my anger would cause me to say something that would cause another outburst of hysterics on her part.

"If we were dependent upon him, we would starve. I beg of you to forgive him and reconsider. Why, I wouldn't even know where to go if we left Templeton Hall. Joel's father never left me anything. All of the estate and business and family holdings went to Joel. It was never even stipulated that he should provide for me."

"Which should have made you more grateful to Joel," I replied, my manner cool; for I had had enough of these two. "Instead, you became quite hostile in your attitude toward me. I have no time to deal with such as the two of you, for I shall

have troubles and responsibilities enough, without having to bear the burden of your displeasure. And now, Greta," I ask that you leave me. I am quite griefworn, and I have much to do."

"Of course," she said, trying with difficulty to hold back the tears. "We erred in our behavior. You are within your rights. I ask only your forgiveness."

"Good night," I said curtly.

She bowed her head and quietly left the room, and barely in time, for I, too, had reached the breaking point. I placed my head on the desk and cried my heart out until my tears had spent themselves. Then I dried my eyes, blew my nose, and restored my frenzied wits to something near normal.

I had lost the only man I had ever learned to love. I'd known him such a short time, been held by him for only scant moments, and kissed him but briefly. Yet I did love him with all my heart, and I knew, within myself, that I had wronged him already.

I couldn't be so heartless as to turn those two people out. Greta was a blood relative of Joel, and regardless of the type of person she or her husband was, they were deserving of a place at Templeton Hall.

I went upstairs to the suite of rooms shared by Frank and Greta. The door wasn't quite closed,

and just as I raised my hand to knock, Greta's voice came out to reach me.

"You're an incredible fool," Greta was saying. "Do you know what you've done? We needed time. We'd get this estate away from her in time, but what do we do while we wait, eh? You spoiled everything. We're family. We should have come first, and we wouldn't have had to sit here and twiddle our thumbs for five years either, but you had to get uppity and spoil it all. I hope you . . . you . . . have to go to work, Frank Elkin."

I shook my head despairingly at these two preposterous people and waited a moment or two so they wouldn't know I'd overheard. Then I knocked and Greta came to the door, her face a mask of meekness.

"I'm sorry I grew so angry downstairs," I said. "If Joel let you remain here for so many years, I don't believe he would wish me to put you out now. You may remain, and whatever the allowance arrangement is, it will continue."

"Oh, thank you, Lorraine," she said. "Thank you very much. Frank didn't mean it. Soon as he thinks about it, he'll apologize. I just know he will."

I thought he would, too, rather than endure more abuse from Greta. "Good night," I said.

I went to my own room and locked the door. I also visited the little office and locked that door as

well, turning the key in both doors so no one could readily push the key out of the lock and insert another. I prepared for supper, though I was without appetite. I wished only that I might remain here alone, where I felt reasonably safe, so that I might think of Joel and pray for guidance and try to reason out what he would have wished me to do with this grave responsibility he had thrust upon me.

I brushed my hair and put on another dress. Then I let myself out and went downstairs. The dining table was set for five. Mrs. Davis bustled in, dour-faced, refusing to look at me.

"May I ask who the fifth place is for?" I asked.

"For Mr. Earl Morgan, who will be coming down to take charge of things the way they should be taken charge of," she said.

"I had forgotten about him," I admitted, and I hoped I wasn't in for another stormy interview. I felt I'd endured all I could for one day. But I realized that, of them all, Earl Morgan had the greatest reason to be angry about the terms of Joel's orders in that letter. I awaited his arrival with more trepidation than I hoped was evident.

Frank Elkin and Greta entered. Greta gave me a meek smile, as great a sham as her pleadings in the library after Frank had left. Frank came directly to me and mumbled something about being sorry and thanking me for changing my mind.

"I hope I shall not be required to change it again," I said pointedly, and he tightened his lips and moved away, with Greta grasping at his elbow to keep him from saying any more.

Mrs. Davis remained away from me, not quite sure what to expect after her premature outburst. Philip had gone to meet his father, and they were due any moment. Promptly on time, just before the soup tureen was brought out, they arrived.

I met Earl Morgan for the first time. He was a large man, once strapping and vital, but gone to age and fat. His handshake was flabby, though apparently sincere enough. He had small, shrewd eyes and the jutting chin and attitude of a fighter, and I had an idea he was going to try me out first, before he unloosed his bolts of lightning.

"Joel was no fool, nor was he softhearted," Earl Morgan said. "Therefore, he chose you to be his executor because he believed you had the ability. Too bad about Joel. Can't understand how that craft of his caught fire. Philip says maybe it was some kind of a fire bomb, but who the devil would want to kill poor Joel, eh? He had no enemies. Easiest man in the world to get along with. Smart, too—a money-maker, and those kind of men I respect. Yes, sir."

He turned the talk to the ship line as we ate supper, and I was interested, because I would now have a share in its operation—perhaps not an ac-

tive one, but I would be required to do some supervisory work to see that Joel's interests were protected. Just how I'd go about that, I had no idea, but Judge Gaylord could advise me how to get the right help. I was accepting Joel's trust in me as something sacred.

Earl tried to get Frank to enter the conversation, but it was useless. Frank spoke only when he gained something by his speech, being a miser with words, except for profit. I didn't care for Frank, but I did believe him harmless. Greta, as Joel had once told me, was the more clever of the pair, though she tried to give the impression of a meek, helpless creature.

Earl, Philip, and I retired to the library, the men with cheroots, brandy, and coffee. I had no chance to occupy Joel's desk as I'd intended. Earl Morgan walked briskly around the desk before I could get to it and lowered himself into the chair. I sank into one of the others.

"Now," Earl said, "we have to talk about some sort of compromise, my girl. You can readily understand that it's impossible for me to wait five years before taking over Joel's share of the business. Absolutely impossible."

"But you will, Mr. Morgan," I said.

"You think so, eh?" He downed the brandy in one gulp. "You really do. You don't know me, young lady. I can take over the firm at any time. . . ."

"If you could, Mr. Morgan," I said quietly, "you wouldn't be wasting time on this discussion. Therefore, you cannot without my consent, and you shall not have it."

Earl looked at his son and broke out in a hearty laugh. "Well, you warned me, son. You said she would fight. Good. . . . I like that. But it's no use. My lawyers will break that will, or whatever it is, without thinking twice. That means trouble for you, my girl. I simply thought I'd give you a chance to move out with no trouble."

"I will not move out," I said.

"Of course you will," he said confidently, and I must admit I wished I had as much confidence as he. "Now let's talk of that sealed will. I can get a court order to open that too. So why wait? Open it."

"I cannot," I said.

"You're the executor. You can do anything with the sort of order he provided. What's the difference anyway? If the provisions of the will don't concern me, we need say nothing about it. . . ."

"I do not have the will," I said. "Nor the document Joel drew up."

"You can get them," he said. "What are you seeking, young lady, some sort of reward?"

"I am going to carry out Joel's wishes to the letter. I have sent all the document to Judge Hamish Gaylord. You may take it up with him if you so desire, but those records are going to become

part of a court file, Mr. Morgan. They cannot be touched without a court order."

"Did you know about this?" Morgan asked his son in a rough voice.

"No, Papa. How could I?"

Earl Morgan drank his coffee, and it must have burned his mouth, for he winced, but he got it all down before he rose.

"I'm going to my room and think about this. In the morning I'll return to New York and put some legal maneuvers into motion. You might have thought you had a good thing out of this, Miss, but you'll find out differently. I'll expect you in a few minutes, Philip."

He stalked from the room. Philip looked at me with a helpless expression. "I told you," he said.

"It was no more than I expected," I said. "But he will have to deal with Judge Gaylord. And if you think your father is firm, wait until he meets the Judge. There's one thing your father must understand. Joel placed his trust in me. I'm going to see that he was right in trusting me."

"I know, Lorraine. I respect you for it. Now I've got to go up and listen to my father for the rest of the night. After he leaves in the morning, you and I will have to try and reach some plan, some method of operation. There's going to be much ado about this, but I pledge you my word that I shall stand by you even if it means breaking with my father."

"Thank you," I said, and I felt that I had misjudged Philip. He was no weakling, no shadow of a man hiding behind a series of jokes and puns to conceal his ineffectiveness. Perhaps, with his help, I might succeed in doing Joel's will. At least I was going to try.

FIFTEEN/

THE FOLLOWING morning when I went down to breakfast, Mrs. Davis told me that Mr. Morgan and his son were in the library and would be pleased if I would join them. I gathered the opinion that it was an order rather than a request. However, since I wished no unpleasantness, I went directly there.

Philip's mouth opened to greet me, but before he could utter a word, his father spoke. "Miss Ward, I wish to see the statement which Joel left to you. Also, any other papers which are in the safe that concern the business."

Mr. Morgan's manner was almost belligerent, but I was determined not to be frightened by it. "The statement that Joel left is not in the safe, sir."

"Then where the devil is it?" he exclaimed, banging a fist on the desk.

"I told you I sent the statement, along with other papers which were in the same envelope, to Judge Gaylord, with the request that he keep them in his care."

"And just what was the reason for that?" he asked.

"I felt—and perhaps not without cause—that they might not be safe here."

"I declare," and his fist came down on the desk again, "I can't imagine what was in Joel's mind when he put you in charge of his affairs."

"Nevertheless he did, and I intend to carry out my duties as I see fit."

"I have half a mind to make you open that safe and let me see for myself," Mr. Morgan snorted. He was beside himself with rage, but I maintained a calm that evidently did naught to ease his turmoil.

"You couldn't force me to do anything, Mr. Morgan, but since you seem to think you can, I will say here and now that I refuse point-blank to open the safe."

"In that case, I shan't waste any more time here." He turned to Philip, who had maintained a discreet silence. "Why didn't you tell me she had mailed everything to Gaylord?"

"I told you I didn't know, Father," Philip said quietly, seemingly as unperturbed as his father was out of temper.

"Sorry I wasted so much time. Drive me to the depot."

Without even a farewell, Mr. Morgan strode from the room. Philip sent me an apologetic glance and followed his father. I returned to the small dining room and sat down to my breakfast of crisp bacon, eggs, hot rolls, and coffee. It was delicious; yet I had already lost my appetite from the scene in the library. However, I knew that Cook had put her best efforts into it; so I managed to eat enough so that the platter didn't go back untouched.

I then returned to the library, where I opened the safe and gathered Joel's notes, which he had used to refer to when he dictated to me. There was also a diary there, and I picked it up and brought it over to the desk. I gave my attention first to the notes and must have spent almost two hours of intense concentration on them, for I wasn't even aware that Philip had entered the room until I raised my eyes to rest them and saw him sitting in a chair some distance away from the desk.

I jumped at sight of him, and he smiled.

"Sorry to have startled you," he said. "But I couldn't bear to interrupt you. I wish to apologize for my father's behavior."

"What will he do, Philip?" I asked.

"Heaven knows! See his lawyers first, I imagine. Then he'll likely visit Judge Gaylord."

"I assure you he will get nowhere with the Judge."

"Papa will have to get used to not having his own way. I assure you, I admired the way you stood up to him. I had no idea you sent those papers to the Judge."

I smiled. "You drove me to the post office. Please tell me, Philip, is there any further word on the accident at sea?"

"None. No further information has reached the village, but it is accepted by all that Joel is dead. He was well liked. I saw more than one tear shed for him."

"I am sure he was highly regarded by all in the village."

"Just what were you so engrossed in when I entered the room?"

"Joel's memoirs. I intend to complete them to the best of my ability."

"But what will be your source of information?"

"The family records, letters, papers, anything I can find. I shall assemble everything and then put it into form for printing."

"He left many notes then?"

"I don't know, for I have not yet examined the entire contents of the safe. There are a number of old ledgers, some Bibles, and many family letters. I intend to do the best I can with these."

"But, Lorraine, to what purpose? Joel is dead."

"He wished it done, and that is purpose enough for me. He was the last of the male Templetons, but there is going to be a record left for any who may be interested."

"Then I wish you success, and if I can help in any way . . ."

"Thank you, but this is a task I wish to complete alone. Do you intend to remain at Templeton Hall?"

He smiled across the room at me. "Am I being ordered out, by any chance? If not, I'll be here for a few days, in case you need me."

"Philip, of course you're welcome. You may remain as long as you wish. I asked only out of curiosity. Now you will have to excuse me, for I have much to do."

"I'll exercise that paint stallion for you," he said. "Do you ride?"

"No, I do not."

"Then you will certainly be taught—and well—by me. It will be a pleasure I shall look forward to."

"Only after I have my work in order and it proceeds as I wish it to. Until then, I shall be far too busy. Shall I see you at dinner?"

He shook his head. "When I ride, I usually drop by Celeste's home, and I do believe it might be well if I did today. She is taking Joel's death very hard."

"I know," I replied. "I am grateful I have this work to take my mind off my anguish."

"Without fail, I will be present for supper," he said.

He rose then and left the room, closing the door behind him. I turned back to my work, searching the desk and discovering scores of family letters I must read. Some were old, some fairly recent, and some from Joel to Bess. I would be required to study them all.

My attention turned then to Joel's day-by-day diary. There, in his large, bold hand was written the last entry—on the morning when he was killed. It related how he was setting sail for New York to see Earl Morgan. He gave no reason for the meeting, but it must have been important. The day before that, he had written of his fears for me and he wondered, on paper, who might be responsible for the eerie happenings in Templeton Hall. Apparently from the brief notes, he was preparing to talk earnestly to Frank and Greta Elkin. He related the finding of Captain Hoyts' body hanging from a tree limb, an apparent suicide, and under the last sentence, in even larger writing he had scrawled, "DON'T BELIEVE IT."

He had left off dictating to me at a point where Bess was still present, but soon to vanish. There was an entry concerned with an argument he had had with Bess when she resented his going off to

wander about the estate alone by night. Joel had defended himself, at least in his notes, by saying he liked to be alone now and then so he might concentrate and think properly, but he frankly stated that Bess had accused him of meeting Celeste during these nocturnal walks.

I had long since established a picture of Bess—a cold woman, and an extremely jealous one as well.

I assembled as many notes as I believed necessary for my work, placed the rest in the safe, and then went upstairs to the little office Joel had set up for me. I spent the day typing as if from his dictation, and I did my best to make the memoirs sound as if he really had just gone on dictating them to me.

This kept me busy well into the day. I didn't go down to dinner; instead, I paused only long enough to partake of a sandwich and a glass of milk. I felt that I must get this work done as promptly as possible, for as I worked, a horrible thought came to me that I might well be the next to die. Was it possible, I asked myself, that Joel was the victim of a murder, just as he had told me he suspected Captain Hoyt had been? If Joel was murdered, the reason was very apparent. Someone was afraid of what he would write in his memoirs. Now I was continuing his work, and while I certainly didn't possess the wealth of information or the thoughts that had been in Joel's mind, I could

be close to some truth a murderer wished never to be revealed.

I had been subjected to the influence of a drug that rendered me unable to move, but left my mind fairly clear, all to discover how far Joel had progressed with the memoirs. Perhaps I would again have to endure this experience, but it would be different now, for they would have me at their mercy with no one to help me. There came creeping into my mind the thought that if I were wise, I might far better abandon everything and thus insure my life. However, I couldn't do it. My loyalty to Joel was absolute, and I was more determined than ever to continue.

It did puzzle me somewhat the way Joel had been trying to trace Bess's movements during the last days and hours before she vanished. When he spoke of her, it was always as if he knew very well that she was dead, and, more than once, I had had the vague and nerve-racking feeling that he not only was certain of her death, but also knew where her body was hidden. If that was so, then could he have been guilty of her murder? I thrust this horrible thought from my mind, for I believed him to have been a man of such honor that if he had murdered his wife, he would have admitted his guilt.

He had been a model of patience and forbearance. Had he not, it would have been impossible

for him to have tolerated Bess. His writings concerned her suspicions of him and her everlasting nagging, and he indicated the hopelessness of trying to reason with her, to assure her he was not in love with anyone else, particularly Celeste, and was not seeing her clandestinely. Bess had believed nothing except what she wished to believe, and most of this had existed only in her imagination.

As I concluded my work for the day, I assembled all the papers and notes. While I arranged them, I thought about Joel's professing his love for me. Somehow, the idea persisted that he would not have done so had he not known that his wife was deceased.

The notion troubled me; for this, with the various indications in his papers and his dictation, was almost proof that he knew what had happened to Bess. If such had ever fallen into the hands of the prosecuting attorney, Joel would never have been set free for lack of evidence.

I carried all the papers down to the library and opened the safe. I arranged the papers carefully on the shelf, and then, sensing another presence, I turned around quickly, to find that Mrs. Davis had quietly opened the door and was standing just inside. She hadn't made a sound in her approach, not even the rustle of her starched apron, which always seemed to accompany every move she made.

"I would like to have a talk," she said.

"Very well. The next time you might knock, Mrs. Davis. You startled me."

"Aye, that I could see."

What I wondered was if she had also seen me turn the combination. It might be possible to read the figures on the dial from the distance between her and the safe if one had exceptional eyesight, though I doubted it.

I took my chair behind the desk. "What is it you wish, Mrs. Davis?"

"I've come to give my notice."

"Very well. When do you wish to be replaced?"

"Replaced?" She stared at me. "You ain't thinkin' of keepin' this old barn of a house goin'!"

"I'll install another housekeeper at once," I said, disregarding her belittling reference to the house.

"But I thought you'd close it up. . . ."

"Mrs. Davis, you just gave me your notice. I require a date."

"Maybe a week, maybe a month." She was hedging now. "My reason you can likely guess. I came here because my mistress brought me here when she married Mr. Templeton. There were many times when I wished to leave, but I was faithful to her, and I remained to care for her the best I could. Then he murdered her, and now he

is himself dead, so there is no further need for me to remain."

"Shall we put it this way, Mrs. Davis? You may leave any time up to the first of the month. After that, you will no longer be on the payroll and another will take your place."

She stood up indignantly. "After all my years . . ."

"You have accused the late master of this house of murder—something you cannot prove. Were he alive and you made this statement he would, without question, discharge you at once. This I will not do, but rather, give you the opportunity to give notice so that I may furnish you with the proper letters of recommendation. For you have been a good housekeeper, even though an ungrateful one."

"You mean to say he didn't kill her?" she demanded. "What a little fool you are. He hated her. He made love to that hussy Celeste. He brought her here to flaunt her before good and saintly Bess, who was his wife. He made love to you as well, I wager. He's a Templeton, and all of them have been scoundrels."

"So you have often said. You need worry no longer about the Templetons after the first of the month, Mrs. Davis. Good afternoon."

She left, less belligerent than she had been when she had slipped quietly into the room. I didn't

know whether she would leave or have a change or heart. While I didn't care for the woman, it would inconvenience me greatly were she to leave at this time, for I had much on my mind. Also, I recalled Joel's remark about letting her stay on in the hope she might provide some clue to his wife's disappearance.

Adding to my perplexity, Philip didn't appear to partake of the evening meal; so I was left with only Greta and Frank for company. He maintained silence all through the meal, scarcely favoring me with a glance, and when he did, it was baleful. As for Greta, she chattered in her familiar simpering manner, expressing her gratitude that they could remain and thanking me for my forgiving nature. Since I knew how false she was, I found it difficult to bear and was relieved when I took my final sip of coffee.

I excused myself at the meal's end and went to my room. Being alone was a solace in itself. I could think of Joel, now, as I wanted to remember him. A kindly, handsome, robust man whom I had loved with all my heart. Even in the depths of my deepest despair, there were moments when I still couldn't believe he had departed this earth. Yet my aloneness was ample proof of it.

I had no desire to walk about the estate by night. In fact, the idea seemed to terrify me. I supposed that Philip had remained at Celeste's

home, and I hardly blamed him, for there was little opportunity for any amusement at Templeton Hall.

I did go downstairs to gather up some of the old family books to study and brought them back to my room, where I pored over the family histories for two hours until I felt my eyes closing on me. Then I extinguished all the lights in the little office and, carrying one of the books, went into the bedroom. I made myself ready for sleep, but I read for another half hour before blowing out the bedlamp.

I had felt a certainty that all this close work, all the reading of sometimes practically illegible writing, would make me tired enough to go to sleep promptly. But instead, I lay there while a slow fear began to creep over me. I was all but alone in this great house with its strange secrets and mysteries. There had been two deaths by violence, and there was greed on every hand. So much so that I felt I was in mortal danger.

I heard creaking sounds, but I refused to allow myself to become disturbed by them, for all ancient houses will creak and creak in the night. But half an hour later, I heard sounds that no old house could make. These were footsteps, faint but plain enough. Like those I had heard when I first came to Templeton Hall, I was unable to place their location, and presently I could have taken

my oath someone walked in this very bedroom—someone I was unable to see. My terror froze me to the bed until, gradually, the steps faded.

Then, with all the determination I could summon, I got out of bed, drew a robe over my shoulders, and put on a pair of slippers before I lit the lamp and ventured into the corridor outside.

It was a long corridor, and my lamplight reached but a small part of it, so that anyone could be lurking in the dark behind the fringe of light, but I heard no one. I walked to the head of the stairs and looked down them. There was only darkness and silence.

But I had heard footsteps, and that could only mean someone had to be abroad. I was tempted to awaken the household, but since I was now mistress of Templeton Hall, I had no wish to be jeered at or laughed at behind my back. Things were bad enough now.

I was about to turn back to my room, when I heard a stealthy sort of sound downstairs. It was like that of a drawer being closed. Before I realized that I might be walking into something very dangerous, I moved cautiously, but determinedly, down the steps.

When I reached the hall, I looked about me, and my breath caught in my throat, for there was a light in the library—the soft, yellow, flickering

light of a candle. I could see the library door through the formal parlor at whose entrance I was standing. This was the only door leading into it. I thought then that the sound I'd heard was undoubtedly that of someone closing the desk drawer, someone who was seeking Joel's notes. Whoever it was must still be there, for the candle was still lit. There was no escape for this person now. Whoever it was could get out of the room only through the door directly in front of me.

Resolutely, I walked forward, and I knew that my silken robe rustled in the silence of the house. Suddenly the light in the library went out. It startled me, but I still had my lamp, and I kept on going. I had no idea of whom I would come face to face with, but I was determined to learn who had invaded the privacy of the desk.

I reached the door and stepped quickly into the room, holding the lamp high. The light reached every corner of the room—and there was no one there! I began to feel the first creeping paralysis of terror. I was unable to move, but the lamp in my hand shook so badly that the shadows flickered like myriad ghostly presences against the walls.

I managed to approach the candelabrum on a low table close by the desk. It was the only one in the room, since Joel had liked oil lamps far better. This candelabrum held four candles. Three had never been lit, but the fourth showed a black-

ened wick, and when I touched the wax, it was still soft, still warm.

Someone had been here! But the candle had gone out as I faced the door, and no one had emerged. If there'd been a human presence here, how had he or she escaped from the room without being seen? I set down the lamp and rushed to the windows, frantically hoping I would find one of them open. They were all closed and locked from the inside!

I walked behind the desk and lit both lamps on it before I sat down. I was frightened to a point where anything unexpected would have caused me to scream and, perhaps, faint. I tried the desk drawer. It was locked. The key was in my bedroom; so I was unable to open the drawer and see if anything had been disturbed.

I did examine the safe to make certain that had not been opened—at least by the use of force. Wondering if it was possible someone else knew the combination, I opened it, but everything inside was quite intact, and I breathed a great sigh of relief.

The only thing the desk drawer contained that could have interested anyone—so far as I knew—were family letters. I was tempted to go upstairs, get the key to the desk, and make sure the letters were still there, but the idea of going through the darkened house and then returning was too much

for me to contemplate. I decided against it. If they were intact, they could still be here in the morning. Even if I did discover they were missing tonight, there was nothing I could do about it anyway, and it would only increase my uneasiness.

The silence was eerie, nerve-shattering. How I needed Joel! How I missed him! It had never been driven home so forcefully as now. I began to cry, but I managed to stem the tears somewhat while I extinguished the lamps. Picking up my own lamp, I made my way through the dark house, up the unique staircase whose beauty I could no longer appreciate, and thence to my own room.

I closed and locked the door. Then I placed the lamp on my bed table, threw myself on the bed, and gave way to the sorrow and anguish that had been storing up within me these many hours.

I must have cried myself to sleep, for when I awakened, it was daylight. I was surprised to see I had somehow covered myself, though I still wore the robe over my nightgown. The events of the evening before were a blur until I grew fully awake, and then they came back with a rush.

Something else came back to me as well. I had dreamed. This time it was not a nightmare, but a pleasant and wonderful dream. Joel had been in the room, and he had bent over the bed and kissed me on the cheek while I slept. Though it had

been but a dream, it had seemed very real, and I smiled sadly as my mind clung to the memory.

Then I found myself regarding the bed lamp. I could see there was still oil in the glass reservoir, but I recalled very distinctly that I had gone to sleep with the lamp still burning. Yet it was out, and the oil wasn't used up.

Had I awakened momentarily and extinguished it? I must have, though I had no recollection of it. And then I thought of the dream again. Could it actually have happened? I shook my head, forcing myself back to reality and feeling a faint exasperation that I would allow myself such fanciful thinking.

Yet I knew I hadn't dreamed of going downstairs and seeing a light in the library. That had been all too real, and I was eager to check the locked desk drawer to see if anything had been disturbed. With the light of day I was more curious than fearful, though I knew that were any of the letters missing, or if I found evidence that they had been tampered with, I might well have cause to feel uneasiness, for it would mean that someone was still seeking information he or she believed was a clue to the death of Bess Templeton.

I dressed quickly and went downstairs, passing the dining room with not a thought of food, for I was most interested in seeing what the intruder had been up to.

First, I checked the safe once again and found its contents intact. I breathed a sigh of relief; then I inspected the candle again. It was the only evidence that anyone had been in this room during the night.

I inserted the key in the desk drawer, turned the lock, and drew it open. I was stunned to see a new diary there, but that wasn't what made me catch my breath.

Atop the diary lay a fresh red rose, obviously from the garden. I stared at it in both awe and fear, then slowly reached into the drawer and lifted the flower. I bent to inhale its sweet fragrance, wondering who could have placed it there.

Slowly, an idea began to form in my mind. Had I really dreamed that Joel kissed me last night, or . . . ? I dared not raise my hopes! Yes who in this house thought enough of me to make such a gesture? Philip? He had no key to this drawer. Or even if he had, he would scarcely call attention to inspecting its contents.

I placed the rose on the desk reverently and lifted the diary. Slowly, I opened the diary, and it almost fell from my hands as I saw the large, bold hand. It was Joel's! It could be none other! And there was a fresh entry in it.

My eyes carefully read each word, and my heart and spirits lifted as my mind drank in the contents of the page.

This day it has occurred to me that Bess often followed me when I took some of my nocturnal walks. I used to hear her stalking me, trying to be quiet so I would not suspect I was being followed. Several times I deliberately misled her and got away, though not with any particular reason, for I was not meeting anyone, as she suspected and accused.

It must have taken considerable courage on her part—or perhaps her anger gave her the courage —but my walks were along the little-used paths that skirt the area where there is considerable back tide, and I often sat where the old tide-water mill used to be.

Perhaps it is there she went the night she vanished. I have not yet searched the area, but I do believe such a search should be conducted, and I intend to do so. It is my desire that these thoughts be made part of the memoirs and that they be held secret for the time being.

Suddenly I felt uplifted, almost gay. They had not found Joel's body. Therefore, he lived! Therefore, he had returned in the night. He had kissed me, and he had left this message for me! He was still alive, this man I loved with all my heart! Yet he wished this to be a secret, and I meant to keep it so, though it would be most difficult, for even

now I felt like bursting into song, such was my relief as I rose up from the black depths of despair.

I closed the book and pressed it to my bosom. Joel had written this! He was alive! He had to be, but he did not want it known. His body had not been found. Had he set fire to his sloop himself and then rowed to shore to remain hidden for some reason? Or had there been a fire bomb aboard that he had escaped?

In any case, he was alive! And one day he would reveal himself. It was he who was in the house last night! It was he who had kissed me and then gently placed the bedclothes over me to cover my body. And it was he whose footsteps I had heard.

I picked up the rose and slipped it in the bodice of my dress. Then I went to the safe to place this newest diary safely away from prying eyes. He had meant me to hear him. He knew I would check to see that all was well. And now, though I knew it was far from well with Bess's death still unsolved and Captain Hoyt's murderer still walking about free, I felt that Joel was exerting all his efforts to uncover the perpetrator who had committed those vile deeds.

I left the library with a smile on my lips and a song in my heart. I must be cautious not to betray my secret knowledge, for it would mean danger to Joel. If he had disappeared of his own volition,

then he had reason to, and I must do my part. Last night I had been in the black depths of despair. This morning, my step was light and I wanted to hum a tune, but I forced myself to pause until I had resumed a somber expression in keeping with the recent bereavement of Mr. Joel Templeton.

SIXTEEN/

AFTER breakfast I asked one of the maids to request Frank and Greta to see me in the family parlor. Greta entered almost eagerly, like someone bent upon doing everything possible to help. Frank was as sullen as usual, but he was attentive.

"There is, well behind the estate and not far from the waterfront, an area of tideland," I said. "Frank, are you familiar with it?"

"No, Miss Ward. I never go there, because it's messy."

"Once—a long time ago—it was very nice," Greta said. "When Papa and I first came here—while poor Joel's father was alive—there used to be a wooden tide mill there."

"Tide mill's got a paddle wheel that works when the tide comes in and goes out," Frank added for my benefit, the greatest bit of confidence he had so far offered.

"Thank you," I said. "I wouldn't have known what a tidewater mill was."

"There used to be a very pretty path leading to the mill," Greta said, her face alight in memory. "In those days the tide wasn't as high as it is now. There are times when everything gets well flooded."

"Is the mill still there?" I asked.

"Oh no," she said. "It fell down years ago. Only the foundation remains, and that's because it is made of great stones."

"Can one reach the mill easily?" I asked her.

"Yes, but it wouldn't do to try it at high tide. Even at low, it's not a place to wander about. What looks like just a little pool of water is sometimes very deep. You have to stay right on the path."

"Why do you ask this?" Frank was suddenly curious.

"I wish to familiarize myself with every inch of the estate," I told him. "I may even have the old mill rebuilt. It shouldn't be allowed just to lie there, rotting away."

"But would you attempt such an undertaking so soon after poor Joel's tragic death?" Greta asked.

I knew the shock, which was registered on her face, was genuine, and I suppose I did sound a little irreverent. And indeed, if I believed Joel dead, I would have been so. I cautioned myself to keep

my feelings under better control. The rose was crushed against my bosom, for I could not bear to let it leave my person. But I fear its very presence there served to lighten my heart to an extent that was evident in my face and my manner. I would indeed have to exercise great care not to reveal my knowledge that Joel was not dead.

"Lot of nonsense. Waste of money, that's what it'll be," Frank said, breaking into my thoughts. "Our money. It'll be ours some day. I ought to go to law if you try that. Shows what a female—"

"That will do, Frank," Greta said sharply. "Lorraine is executor and administrator of poor, dear Joel's estate, and we must not interfere with any plans she wishes to make. I'm sure she will be well advised before she takes any step like restoring the mill."

"I intend to go down there and look around," I said, my manner casual, but watching the pair of them as narrowly as I dared without letting them notice. However, if they were appalled by the news, neither showed the slightest worry or concern.

"Serve you right, you get caught in the tide," Frank said.

"Please don't go there alone," Greta begged, and I must say her concern sounded genuine. "No matter what you think of us for the sad way we

conducted ourselves, my dear, we wish nothing to happen to you."

I had few doubts of that, for should I be killed, the terms of Joel's instructions might result in everything comprising this estate being liquidated. Of course that was not so now. Joel was alive. He was close by. Once again, in my reverie, I felt the touch of his lips on my cheek, and a surge of happiness swept through me.

"Thank you both," I said hastily, fearful my feelings might reveal themselves. "You have been of great help to me."

I felt them in the family parlor and went out of doors, to find Philip coming up the stairs from an early-morning ride. I had to admit he was a fine figure in his riding costume, carrying the quirt in that boyishly careless fashion of his.

"Good morning," he said. "You look well rested and even cheerful this morning."

"I am rested," I said, "and I feel refreshed, but there is little to be cheerful about, Philip. I expected you back for supper last evening."

"I know, but Celeste was so heartbroken I was actually afraid to leave her alone. I returned very late."

"You saw no one?" I asked.

"No. Was there any trouble?"

"I thought I heard footsteps near my room after I retired," I said.

"It could have been I," he admitted. "Though I did my best to be quiet when I came in."

"It was probably my imagination playing tricks, for the house is old and creaky."

"The wind often plays tricks," he said. "A branch scraping against an outer wall can sound like a dozen fiends trying to batter their way in."

"True. I shall disregard such sounds in the future," I vowed. "Will you be going to New York today?"

"I hardly think so. Papa gives me little to do anyway, preferring to handle everything himself."

"I thought you might learn what his plans are concerning Templeton Hall and me," I said, then added, "but that is scarcely a fitting suggestion for me to make."

"He would tell me little. However, I believe he'll lose no time in returning, and then you'll know soon enough. I don't look forward to the day, for he's a difficult man. I only wish you and he could get along."

"My dear Philip," I said lightly, "there is nothing I would like better than to become friends with your father, but his manner is so arrogant and overbearing that I can do naught but face up to him; and that I intend to do."

"But you have such a winning way with you, Lorraine." Philip's voice was almost a plea. "I'm

sure if you put forth the effort, you could win over my father."

My smile was patient. "Philip, you know your father is so filled with anger and resentment that no matter what I did, short of turning everything over to him, it would displease him."

"I suppose you're right," he agreed, somewhat reluctantly. "But I'm so fond of you. Oh, Lorraine . . ." His arms raised, and he moved toward me in a gesture I could in no way mistake.

"No, no, Philip," I said, stepping back quickly.

"You can't love a dead man," he said bluntly.

"I can love his memory. He is still very much alive there."

He shrugged. "Then I guess it's hopeless."

"It is, Philip. Tell me, how is Celeste?"

"Quite wretched. It seems that my role in life is destined to be that of a man attempting to solace heartbroken and bereaved females."

"If so, it's a role you play well," I told him. "Have you breakfasted?"

"I have not, and I'm famished," he said, once again his cheerful self. I doubted that his heart was troubled because neither Celeste nor I cared much for him. "Do you suppose cook will be good-hearted enough to provide me with breakfast?"

"I daresay she will. Shall we go in and see?"

"By all means. Will you keep me company while I eat?"

"I will gladly, for I have a favor to ask."

"You have but to command me."

We went into the house and directly to the dining room. Cook provided an ample breakfast, which Philip attacked with relish.

"I'm told there is an old, fallen-down tide mill far back on the estate," I said, as I poured coffee for both of us. "I wish to see it. Will you take me there?"

He slowly put down his fork and regarded me with amazement. "What in the world do you wish to go there for?"

"Philip," I said, "you're acting just as Frank and Greta did. They seem to regard the mill as something dangerous or unfit for the human eye."

"It's not that, but the whole area is treacherous."

"Tell me about it," I begged him.

"Well—it was just an old wooden mill on a heavy stone foundation. The hide came in and turned the wheel. I don't know what they ground in the mill—meal, perhaps. At any rate, it hadn't been used in many years, and it finally fell down. That must have been—oh—fifteen years ago. I barely recall the place. I haven't been there since I was a boy. The area is just a lot of marshy tideland full of mosquitoes and cottonmouths. I would strongly advise against your going there."

"But it's part of the estate, and I am in charge

of it; so I must see what it is. If you refuse to take me, I'll go alone," I said with an air of independence.

He smiled as he said, "Oh, I'll take you. I wouldn't think of letting you go there alone. There's nothing but marsh, the ruins of the mill—"

"Please, Philip, let us go there at once," I exclaimed impulsively. "I do wish to see it. It must be very quaint."

Again he gave me a quizzical look, as if he couldn't understand my attitude, but I didn't mind if he thought me foolish, for my joy was such that I was finding it increasingly difficult to keep it hidden and wished mightily that there was someone with whom I could share it.

We walked out along the pathway from the house, gradually veering down toward the waterfront. Here, there was no beach, only sharp rocks and tall, saw-toothed weeds; so it was necessary that we remain on the path at all times.

Gradually, we came out over the tideland, the low terrain over which the sea swept the tide. Much of the water remained even when the tide was low. Gulls found plentiful food here and were constantly soaring above or swooping down on some unfortunate mollusk or fish trapped in shallow water. The path had been built out above the

marshy ground and high enough so that it was never awash, except in furious storms.

"They're holding Walt Hoyt's funeral day after tomorrow," Philip said. "I know of no one who is going."

"I shall go," I said. "And I shall arrange to pay all the bills, for I know Joel had intended to do so. Philip, what an awful waste of land this is."

We stood on the path, which was only wide enough for one person at a time, while I surveyed the lowland. Even the air smelled of a strong, marshy type of salt water. Directly ahead stood the foundation of the old mill. The paddle wheel had fallen into a decayed ruin, but it was still recognizable. The building itself had all but disappeared, except for the great rocks cemented together to form the foundation. Apparently, there had been waterproofed pits dug in the cellar of the building, for now that it was low tide I could see the tops of these. Storage bins, likely.

"It's not even picturesque," I said. "You were right, Philip. It wasn't worth coming all the way out here to see."

There were treacherous-looking planks placed atop the walls and some of the pits, but I wasn't inclined to trust them. I told Philip I'd seen enough. Then I backed away, for it was all but impossible to turn around on this narrow ridge of earth. When we reached firmer and less treacher-

ous ground, Philip took my arm and we walked rapidly back to the house.

I moved with springy steps and a light heart, and I had great difficulty in keeping myself from telling Philip that Joel lived. I wondered when he would announce his remarkable return from the dead. There must be a reason why he did not do so at once and why he chose to communicate with me so secretly that even I hadn't recognized his touch at first.

After we returned I went to my room to change my shoes, for the soft earth had muddied them. When I returned downstairs, Philip was in the entrance hall, seriously engaged in conversation with a stranger. Their discourse died away as I regarded them. Philip excused himself and came over to me.

"This gentleman," he waved a hand in the direction of the man to whom he had been speaking and slowly led me over to the stranger, "is from the village, sent by the constable, who was unable to come. He says that word has just arrive to the effect that Joel's body was washed up on a beach at . . ."

I heard no more. My senses reeled under the impact of this news and all that it meant to me. I'd borne all I could, and I toppled to the floor before either man could seize me.

When I awakened, I was on one of the sofas in

the family parlor, and Philip was holding smelling salts under my nostrils. I weakly brushed the bottle away and tried to sit up, but Philip placed a hand on my shoulder and held me down on the sofa.

"Not yet. Rest a bit. Lorraine. All of this is simply too much for you, though we should have expected that. . . . Well . . . the sea does give up some of its dead. . . ."

I managed to sit up, finally, with his help. Now I was confused and frightened and despairing all over again. "Philip," I asked, "are they sure it is Joel's body?"

"It was identified by several people, my dear," he said. "There is no question."

I got to my feet, somewhat unsteadily, and brushed aside his efforts to help me. "I wish to go to my room, if you please. It may be that I will not come down to supper. Forgive me, Philip, and thank you for your solicitousness."

As I mounted the stairs slowly, they seemed to extend clear to the heavens. My legs trembled under me as I walked down the corridor. All that had happened before in this house was as nothing compared to now.

Only a few short hours ago I had believed Joel alive. I was impatient and eager to view his dear face again, to feel his arms around me, to hear him tell me he loved me. I felt that he had the

right to do so and that I had the right to listen and tell him I returned his love; for I firmly believed now that Bess was dead. I had believed that Joel knew where her body was concealed, and I had believed the reason for his not having revealed that he was alive had been that he wished to trap the murderer into admitting his dire deed.

But how wrong I had been! Joel was dead! My Joel! The only man I loved or ever could love. I closed the door behind me and leaned against it. Then I opened the bodice of my dress, removed the rose petals that were crushed against my flesh, and pressed them to my cheek.

I moved with lagging steps over to the bed and lay across it to cover my eyes with one arm and cry bitter tears, for a feeling of utter hopelessness pervaded my being. I knew I was reacting to the upsurge of hope that had filled me and then having all my happiness struck down by the indisputable fact that I had been wrong. That Joel had not come back—at least, in life.

I had never believed in the spirit world, and I would have given no credence to it now, except that Joel had been so strong a man, so completely resolved to discover who had killed Bess. If anyone could return to this life from the beyond, it would be Joel.

And if he had come and came once again, I would not be frightened. Rather I would seek

him out and welcome him and help him if I could. But how did one summon a ghost?

How I wished I had someone to talk to, to confide in. There was Philip, but somehow I knew he was not the answer, for he was too much under his father's domination. He was, in short, not a strong character, and I felt pity for him. Judge Hamish Gaylord? Of course, except that he was too far away, and I had not the time to make the journey to New York. I must stay here. I felt that I was needed here, that, in some way, I could help. Only how? The question tortured me, for I could think of no answer.

I thought back to the night I had heard the footsteps and had gone to investigate, finding a light in the library, which, as I approached, had gone out. Nonetheless, I had touched the candle and found it warm. Surely a ghost would have no need of illumination. Then there was the new diary, with a fresh entry in what I would swear was Joel's script. But what I held most dear was the rose, which I took to be a gesture of his love for me, and the kiss. I felt certain I had not dreamed it; yet even if I had, the rose was real, for even now I could feel the softness of its petals against my cheek.

I regarded it through tear-stained eyes. It was no longer fresh, its petals having been crushed against my flesh and now stained with my tears;

yet I still saw it with the beauty it had had when first I viewed it.

What was happening now was almost as inexplicable and fearsome as the nightmares I'd endured at the hands of Captain Hoyt and whoever had conspired with him—and later murdered him. And the more I thought about it, the more convinced I was that one of flesh and blood could never have left the library that night without my seeing him. The candle had gone out, but I had still held the lamp. There was but one exit, and my eyes hadn't left the open doorway. I knew that no one had left the room. Therefore, it could not have been Joel.

Yet was I as brave as I thought? Would I welcome Joel's spirit? A shudder went through me, and I knew I was no different from anyone else. A ghostly presence would be terrifying, even when it was a beloved one.

I rose and went into the bathroom and bathed my face with cold water. It served to steady me so that I might think more clearly. I reminded myself I was here for one purpose. Joel had entrusted me to carry out his wishes, and I was determined to do that. I would continue to transcribe his memoirs, not so much to create a family history on paper as to search among his notes for reasons and motives that might pertain to the death of Bess. I no longer thought of her as having disap-

peared. I felt certain she was dead. Otherwise, why would I have been drugged and taken from the house to be questioned? And why would Joel's boat have been set afire for him to perish at sea? The answer was simple. *Her body was nearby, and someone feared its discovery!*

The mysterious entry in the diary had to be most pertinent. All along I had been getting the vague and incredible idea that Joel knew what had happened to Bess. I thought of the new diary I had found in my desk. The entry had called my attention to the marshland left by the tides, and the old, ruined tidemill. At least I had gone there —without result so far, but I was now wondering if it were possible that Bess had been killed and her body hidden out there. That morass could have hidden a thousand bodies. But why had it not been discovered by now? Bess had been missing a long time. If the tide was unable to wash it out to sea, it could have moved it to such an extent that it had changed position and, quite possibly, should have been seen by someone.

Yet who went there? Certainly no one from the house. They dreaded the spot. And the servant certainly wouldn't choose that area to pass their leisure time. There had been no trespassers who might come upon a body. Therefore, it could be lying there, decomposing, perhaps even devoured by animals (I shuddered visibly at the

thought), and the person who committed this vile deed would never be apprehended.

I knew not who had written those words in the diary, but I felt they held great portent. Should I go there and search? Is that what those prophetic words in the diary meant? If I could find her body and reveal her death, perhaps there was something about her death that would prove his innocence.

I made up my mind to return to the tideland tomorrow and begin a search. I would conduct it alone. If it were dangerous, then so be it, but I believed this was what Joel wanted of me, and I intended to fulfill his wishes. I could steel myself against fear of anything, even the supernatural. I would, indeed, welcome any manifestation if it came from Joel. For now that I knew he was dead, all hope for his return had vanished and I could do no more than follow the instructions.

I had no desire for food, but I decided to go downstairs, to see if all was well. I arranged my hair and changed to a fresh dress, and as I started down the stairway, I heard the booming voice of Earl Morgan. I sighed wearily and was tempted to return to my room, then decided against it. I did not fear the man, and I would stand up to him. I could be as obstinate as he, and I believed he was fast coming to that opinion. He was in the family parlor, smoking one of his thin cheroots and hold-

ing a glass that contained a very generous portion of brandy. Philip sat nearby, but rose as I entered. However, his father retained his seat and without even a greeting, started to address me.

"I heard about the finding of Joel's body," he said. "I have already sent a telegram to the authorities at the town where he was found and asked them to prepare the body for shipment here. Joel was an important and highly admired man. I intend to see that he gets a funeral in keeping with his status. With or without your approval Miss Ward. And I must say that Judge Gaylord is the most obstinate man I have ever met. I do well imagine you two get along very well."

"You will find that whatever orders Joel left will be carried out," I said, "exactly as he wished them to be. Thank you for taking care of the details of the funeral. And now if you will excuse me, I shall retire."

"Lorraine, you haven't eaten," Philip said with concern. "May I have a sandwich and a glass of milk sent up to you?"

"No, thank you. Tomorrow we shall talk further, Mr. Morgan. Good night, Philip, and thanks for your solicitude."

I returned to my room, grateful that no one came near me. My sorrow was profound now that Joel's body had been discovered. I could shed no more tears. I felt not even heartache, for a numb-

ness had overcome my body. I dreaded the coming of darkness, for I felt that with it, my grief would close in on me. I tried to read, but that was impossible. I wondered what Earl Morgan was doing downstairs. Probably looking through some of Joel's papers that still remained in the desk or searching for his diary, if he knew of its existence. I was glad they were both locked in the safe. I doubted he knew the combination. As for the desk, I imagined he would have little difficulty in finding a key to open it.

My thoughts were all of Joel. Of how much I loved him, even though I'd known him such a pitifully short time. Joel, whose life had been beset with troubles—an unhappy marriage, an accusation of murder, a conspiracy directed against him, and then his own death. For I had no doubt that he had been murdered. Nor did I doubt that he had expected it and perhaps guarded against it, though not quite well enough.

The evening was endless. I tried again to read and again found it impossible. I couldn't even concentrate on the ancient family ledgers and Bibles of the Templeton family, which I had brought to my room for study.

It was late—my watch said nearly midnight—when I decided, since it was impossible for me to sleep, to go downstairs to the library and await Joel, in case he should return again in spirit. It was

an absurd idea, but I decided to obey the impulse, for I could no longer bear the solitude of my room.

I placed a medium-weight, blue-velvet cloak over my shoulders, for the evening was cool, and I chose sturdy shoes in case I wished to go forth from the house.

I found the corridor dark; so I carried my lamp downstairs and made my way to the library. The old house was creaking again, although even these commonplace sounds didn't seem to break the eerie blanket of immense silence that hung over the house.

I placed the lamp on the desk and sat down and waited—for what I knew not, but I was filled with apprehension of the direst nature.

SEVENTEEN/

I HAD kept my ears attuned to all the normal sounds of the old house by night, so that when I heard the footsteps, my heart started to pound rapidly and I gripped the edge of the desk to steady myself. Reasoning told me that ghosts made no sounds—that is, if there were ghosts, which I did not believe. These were steps made by a human—someone not trying to hide his approach. They came closer and closer, and I heard them cross the parlor and approach the library door.

"I'm glad you're here alone, Lorraine," he said.

"Mr. Morgan," I exclaimed, feeling a momentary annoyance that I had allowed myself such a fright.

He entered the room and stood before the desk. I could see the sternness of his face, the determination written there, and, yes, the cruelty as well, for he was no longer trying to hide behind the mask of a successful businessman. I felt more fear-

ful of his presence than I had while wondering who was approaching.

"Joel is dead. He has seen fit to leave you in charge of this estate. I intend to contest the legality of it, particularly as it applies to the ship line. But there are other matters to come first. Joel has a diary. I wish to see it."

"The diary is private," I said.

"A dead man's property cannot be private," Earl Morgan exclaimed. "You will hand me that diary or I shall take steps to seize it. They may not be pleasant ones."

"How are you so sure there is a diary?" I asked.

"I am aware that Joel kept a diary. Where is it?"

"In the safe, Mr. Morgan, and I alone know the combination. I do not intend to give it to you."

He shrugged. "It will make but little difference in the end."

"Your son will not stand by and allow you to harm me in any way. . . ."

Earl Morgan raised his voice. "Philip, come in here."

Apparently, Philip had been in the other room, waiting to see how I would react. If I bowed to his father's wishes, he would keep his presence a secret, and I would still believe him to be a friend. But now he was changed from the gay, carefree man I'd known. He took his place beside his father, frowning darkly in the lamplight.

"Lorraine, there are several million dollars at stake," he said. "My father and I intend to take over the steamship lines now. If you stand in our way, you will be hurt. We're warning you. If you're a sensible girl, you'll back down."

"I'm defenseless, I said, "except in my resolution to defy both of you."

"You refuse to open the safe?" Philip asked.

"I do indeed."

"Then the diary is locked in it."

"Where you cannot reach it," I said.

Philip smiled thinly. "A man who owns a safe usually keeps the combination in two places, besides in his memory. Joel was no different. He had it written on a pad in his office desk. I mean at the steamship line office. My father found it there. Now I'm going to open the safe, and I warn you —don't interfere."

He walked behind the desk. I couldn't stop him. It would be senseless to try, for there was no doubting their determination. I didn't know what they intended to do with me, but so long as I retained consciousness and a certain degree of freedom, I could still resist when I saw the opportunity. I realized now that Philip had cleverly deceived me all this time. He and his father were of the identical selfish stripe.

Philip consulted a slip of paper in his hand and turned the combination. He pulled the safe door open and picked up the new diary, and as he did

so, another fresh red rose fell from atop it to the chair. Disdaining any threat they might offer, I rose and bent down to pick it up. I touched it to my lips.

Philip paid scant heed to me, thinking, perhaps, I had placed it there myself. He opened the diary. A bit of paper dropped out from between the pages where the last entry had been made. It fell to the desk, and Philip picked it up, scanned it in the light of the lamp, and threw it aside. I saw it was some printed paper, but how it had got between the pages of the diary, I had no idea.

Philip muttered something and handed the diary to his father, who read it quickly.

"Well," he said to Philip, "we've waited too long as it is. Do something about it."

"What of Lorraine?" Philip eyed me coldly.

"I'll remain here with her. Do what must be done and then return quickly. As for you," he directed his words at me now, "should any of the idiots in this house awaken and come down here, you will say only that we are having a business discussion. Unless you do so, I shall kill you out of hand. Is that clear?"

"I do believe you will kill me anyway," I said. "But there seems little I can do, and I do not wish to imperil the life of anyone else."

"Then sit down and be quiet," he said. "Philip, are you certain you can handle it?"

"Yes. If you'd listened to me, this would have been done weeks ago. . . ."

"We couldn't take the chance so long as Joel lived."

Suddenly I realized that Earl Morgan was speaking in a more normal tone of voice, whereas he'd been whispering up to now. Likely he'd forgotten there were others who might awaken, or he was utterly contemptuous of them. But in the silence of the house, his voice took on an echo, and I knew where I had heard it before.

"You're the man who asked me the questions when I was befuddled from the drug Captain Walt used. . . ." I said.

"Oh, so you guessed that, did you? Well, keep quiet, my girl, or you'll hear no voice again, ever."

"Was it you who struck me the first night I was drugged?"

"No. Captain Walt did that. He was a stupid, impatient fool."

"So you murdered him, making it look like suicide. And you also murdered Bess Templeton."

His glance was disdainful. I said no more, for I knew I would be wasting my breath, and I must expend all my energy on trying to outwit this evil person.

I heard Philip leave the house. I judged he would be gone for some time, but his absence gave me little to cheer about. If anything, his father

was a man of even worse character than Philip. Earl Morgan watched me very carefully, leaving the room only once, and then for but a few seconds while he fetched the decanter of brandy from the parlor. He threw the glass stopper aside and drank from the decanter, stalking up and down the room, worried and tense, but also determined to go ahead with whatever plans he had already begun.

Strangely, I wasn't frightened any longer. In this man I saw only one so desperate that he had to resort to killing to get his own way, and, in my opinion, that did not make a very successful or brilliant man of him.

"May I speak, Mr. Morgan?" I asked.

"It will do you no good. If you'd shown me that diary before now, or told me its contents, you wouldn't be in this situation."

"Mr. Morgan, look again at the diary and notice, if you please, the dates of the last two entries. I don't know what is in the last one, but in yesterday's are enough hints about the tidewater and the tide mill to arouse anyone's suspicions."

He looked at the open diary. "What do you mean?"

"Yesterday's entry was written in the diary—yesterday. Today's was written—tonight."

"What nonsense is this?" he cried out. "What are you talking about?"

"Only one person knew what was written in

the diary . . . one day and two days—*after* his death!"

He studied the diary again. "Girl, you're daft."

"Isn't that Joel's hand? And is the book not a new one? Of course it is. And I can swear it was written in after he died—to let me know what had been going on here. There will be more, Mr. Morgan. If you kill me, I may not read it, but someone will. You will not go unpunished."

"Nonsense. Utter nonsense," he said, but his voice wasn't quite as firm as it had been.

"You know I speak the truth. Perhaps tomorrow the diary page will tell of how you murdered Bess."

"Madness," he said in a louder voice. "Sheer madness."

"And the following day how you murdered Captain Hoyt."

"Walt hung himself. Now stop this foolishness. Keep quiet, I tell you."

"May I see what was written this evening?"

"You may not," he said sharply, and seized the diary before I could reach for it.

I watched him glance at the pages again, and this time the hand that held the book shook visibly. He glanced my way and then flung the book down, still out of my reach. He drank copiously from the decanter. Obviously, he was thinking deeply, and I wondered what thoughts were going through his mind.

Suddenly he laughed. "So you think Joel's alive, do you? Well, he isn't. I know where his body lies now—ready to be sent back here. I talked to the mortician and the constable in the town where it was washed up. Joel is dead."

"Yes," I said, keeping my voice calm. "I've known that for some time."

"Then what are you talking about . . . ?"

"You know quite well, Mr. Morgan, and all the brandy in that decanter won't allay your fear. I was afraid at first, but Joel has no reason to harm me. Did you not notice the rose lying atop the diary? Inside a locked safe, Mr. Morgan. I did not place it there. The rose was meant for me—a small token of comfort. But there is no comfort in any of this for you. Nor will there be for Philip, who succeeding in making me regard him so highly, when he is as great a blackguard as you."

"You're making me angry," he warned me. "I would advise you to be most careful, girl. My anger is explosive and knows no bounds."

"Neither does your fear," I said softly.

He drained the brandy container and set it down with a great thump on the desk. So violent was his action that the small bit of paper which had been in the diary and been discarded by Philip was wafted off the desk to the floor. I bent down and picked it up. Mr. Morgan tensed for an instant, but then relaxed. Apparently the paper had no meaning. I glanced at it and saw that it was a

clipping from some published work. I placed it back on the desk before me, and then I suddenly brought my hand to my face and shuddered, for I knew this was the end. Time was running out for me, for I could see no escape. Suppose I screamed and summoned the household. By the time Greta and Frank came downstairs, if indeed they did come, Earl Morgan could have done away with me.

As for Mrs. Davis, I could expect no help from her. And the servants, hearing my scream, would probably cower in their beds. So, for me, there was no escape.

I thought back to the day when I had arrived at Templeton Hall. I had been excited and pleased to be working for Joel Templeton, for even though he lived under a grave cloud, I had never once thought him capable of murdering his wife. I knew now, for a certainty, he had not. The murderer was standing before me. He had been probably abetted by his son. I wondered why I had the slightest doubt as to Philip's part in the plot.

He had pretended to love me only so that he might gain my confidence. How pleased I was that I had not allowed myself to become ensnared by his guile.

Then there had been the murder of Captain Hoyt. Joel had known from the first that it was murder. It was Philip who had conveniently found the body, but Joel hadn't been fooled. Perhaps

Philip and his father knew it and had already plotted Joel's death, knowing his love of the sea.

The Morgans were mad with greed. They had killed twice, probably three times. (I still wondered about the rose that had been in the safe and now lay on the desk.) And I knew I was to be their next victim.

When Philip returned from whatever mission he'd gone on, they'd make up their minds about me. Not about what they should do to me, but how they should do it, so that the result would seem as accidental as the deaths of Joel and Captain Hoyt.

Mr. Morgan was reeling slightly, for he had imbibed a great amount of brandy, and it was very strong. Perhaps, if he became befuddled enough, I might find an opportunity . . . but I would only run into Philip, who wasn't befuddled at all.

My eyes rested on the small bit of paper I'd picked up. Somewhat to my astonishment it seemed to be a cooking recipe. It hadn't been in the diary before, I was certain. I let it drift from my thoughts because there were more pressing things on my mind.

All so hopeless now. I knew my life was forfeit. And Joel was dead. I must forget about the rose. It was probably some cruel joke thought up by the Morgans to raise my hopes, though the idea didn't seem to make much sense. But one thing I knew—Joel was dead. I didn't doubt Morgan's

word on that, for I, too, had heard it from others. Poor Joel . . . who had never had a chance to fight for his life.

Morgan walked the floor restlessly, nervously. He brushed against the decanter and sent it rocking madly across the desk. I reached out and grabbed it, preventing it from falling to the floor. Morgan paid scant heed.

A cooking recipe! My brain suddenly reeled under the impact of that. *A recipe!* I almost reached for the clipping too eagerly. If Morgan had noticed my concern, it would have aroused his suspicions.

It was a recipe for a holiday cake! I pressed the clipping hard against my breast and sought to still the wild beating of my heart. I recalled the same story Joel had told me about one of his ancestors who had supposedly gone down with his ship and his wife who had refused to believe it and instead of weeping, had baked him a welcome home cake. *And he had returned!*

Joel was telling me he was alive! No matter what others said or believed, this message was true and meant for me alone.

The utter relief that swept over me brought a surge of strength and a determination to save myself. But my feeling of triumph was short-lived. Morgan looked my way and saw my face which must have beamed with new-found hope.

"What are you up to, you little devil?" he asked,

as he made a lunge around the desk toward me.

I moved around to the other side, and the blood pulsed madly through my veins as the murderous intent on his face was revealed. My hand touched the decanter, and without thinking, I lifted it, raised it high, and flung it at him with all my strength.

It struck him low on the head, and he pitched forward without uttering a sound. I didn't wait to see how badly he was hurt. I gathered up my skirts and fled to the front door and outside.

Joel was alive! He was somewhere on the estate. Perhaps he didn't know that Philip was a blackguard too, and he might approach him. I had to find Joel to warn him, and I had to discover what Philip was up to in the event that Joel was not here. As I ran, I prayed he would be close by.

But he was alive! He had given me a sign that had passed through the hands of his two arch enemies, and they had not recognized it. No one would have but me.

EIGHTEEN/

I KEPT my wits about me sufficiently to know that it would be impossible for me to go rushing out over the tideland with its narrow pathway unless I was provided with some sort of light. So I hurried first to the stables and found a lantern. I shook it to be sure it was well filled, and then I found matches and got the lantern lit with the wick turned up so I might have the fullest possible amount of light.

I went quickly to the path leading toward the tidewater area, and soon I was on the narrow walkway with the marshy land on either side of me. I was fortunate that the tide was again low.

I could see the faint light from another lantern that seemed to have been set on the stone of the old mill wheel. That would be Philip. I paused for a moment, and suddenly I looked about me most carefully to memorize my surroundings before I

blew out the lantern. I didn't think Philip had seen me, but if I drew closer carrying the lantern, he most certainly would. I had to find out what he was doing and then try to slip away and find Joel.

At any moment, Earl Morgan might recover consciousness and come storming down here. If he did, I would be completely trapped, for I couldn't step off this path unless I was willing to risk being swallowed up by the morass on either side of it.

The lantern stood like a beacon, drawing me closer, but I saw no signs of Philip. I wondered where he could possibly be, for there was nowhere to hide out here. I kept on going, making my approach as noiseless as I could. Philip should have been visible against the night sky or if not, then certainly, if he was nearby, within range of the lantern light. Yet I didn't see him.

I reached the stone foundation and stood upon the wall not far from where the lantern rested. Philip was not here! Yet he had to be, unless he had fallen into the water somehow. I tested the strength of a wooden plank that lay across one of the round pits. To reach the further side of the foundation, I would have to cross over it. The plank seemed strong enough, and, moving cautiously and scarcely daring to breathe, I crossed it.

When I stood on the further wall, I saw Philip at

last. He had been in one of those circular pits, and now he rose from it like something emerging from the earth itself. He was within reach of his lantern, and he quickly grasped it as he stood erect on the stone wall. I looked about me. There was nowhere I could go. I was as securely trapped as if I had backed into a corner of a room. He was a fearsome sight, dripping wet, covered with a pale-green slime.

"How did you get away from my father?" he demanded, anger searing his face.

"What do you intend to do with me?" I demanded of him, disregarding his question.

"What can I do, Lorraine, but kill you? You placed yourself in this predicament. I suppose my father got drunk. Well, it's up to me now."

"How can I harm you?" I asked, hoping for time. "I know so little."

"The little you do know is most important," he said. "What happened to my father? Answer me!"

"Perhaps the same thing which will happen to you," I said. I was bluffing, trying to gain time, hoping against hope that if Joel were alive, he would reach me in time.

"What do you mean by that? Who else is on this estate?"

"One you cannot harm," I said, forcing my voice to a calmness I didn't feel. "Philip, did you not notice that the last two entries in the diary

were written since Joel's death? And in his hand? Did you not notice the fresh red rose lying atop the diary, even though it had been locked in the safe? I did not put it there. Joel did—and he placed another there last night as well."

Philip laughed. "Lorraine, if you're trying to tell me that Joel is back in the form of a ghost, you're wasting your time. I don't believe in ghosts."

"I'm telling you only what I have experienced. The diary entries, the red roses, sounds I heard in the night . . ."

"What did you do to my father?" he asked again, loudly this time, and I knew he had reached the end of his patience.

"Bess is in one of these pits, isn't she? That's where you hid her body all this time. You tried to make it seem that Joel had killed her and burned the body, but you made a mistake when you used male bones instead of those of a female."

"You see," he said, his smile ugly, "how necessary it is for me to kill you?"

"Was it necessary to kill Bess?"

"We didn't intend to kill her. She died by accident. We were after Joel, not her. He used to come out here by the mill and walk along the walls. I think it seemed quiet and peaceful here after listening to Bess. But she used to follow him,

for she believed he was seeing Celeste when, in truth, he was not."

"You wanted the steamship line for yourself."

"Why not? Joel was wealthy enough without it."

"And when Bess was killed, you thought there was nothing further to thwart you. But your evil plans went awry, thank God."

"They did. It was Joel who was supposed to fall into the pit as he crossed over the plank, but Joel didn't go out that far this night. Bess did, searching for him, and the plank broke and she went down."

"You are as guilty of her murder as if you had planned it for her alone," I said, "though it makes little difference, for you also killed Captain Hoyt."

"Walt was a fool. He found Bess's body and blackmailed us, swearing he saw us set the trap. I warned my father not to trust him, but Walt had these leaves he said would put anyone in a stupor and yet compel them to answer questions. But Walt couldn't wait. He tried to kill you by turning you adrift in the dory, because it would hurt Joel. He was angry that Joel had been released. That's what Walt was after—revenge."

"You're an evil lot," I said. "Oh, Philip, how could you have deceived me this way? I trusted you. Are you so completely wicked you will murder and murder and murder?"

He nodded, and his face looked grotesque in the lamplight. "I placed a fire bomb on Joel's boat. That's why I know he's dead."

I closed my eyes as if by doing so I could shut out the horror of the moment.

"You will have to join Bess," he said. "I have brought up her body, and I shall wait for high tide and cast it adrift. By now, no one can recognize her. We feared Joel, for we knew he would never cease his search for Bess's body until he found her. Now I have to kill you and dispose of two bodies."

He began moving toward me. I wondered whether, if I ran straight at him, I might dislodge him somehow as he crossed over the plank. More likely, he would dislodge me; but I would, at least, be trying to save my life and not surrendering without a fight.

"Joel!" I shouted. "Joel, if you are here, I need you! Joel . . . come to me now! . . ."

"He is dead, I tell you," Philip called out. "I suspected he might not be until the word came that his body had been washed ashore. You're a stupid girl to think you can call up a ghost—"

He stopped rather abruptly and looked about him. I heard him cry out in fear, and I looked around, too. There were small yellow lights all about the tideland, lights that moved closer and closer. Now someone was coming up behind Philip—a tall, sturdy figure that I recognized.

Philip may have sensed the figure behind him. He began to turn and at the same time reach for his hip pocket, where I suspected he carried a pistol. But the figure moved far faster than Philip, and in a moment Philip was held in a mighty embrace that made him cry out in pain.

The yellow lights moved faster. Several men, in fishermen's hip boots, all carrying rifles, closed in rapidly. A few moments later two of them took charge of Philip, who no longer struggled.

Then Joel came leaping over the dangerous pits as if they didn't exist. He stood before me on the narrow stone wall, and his arms went about me and I felt safer than if I were standing in the center of the parlor at Templeton Hall.

"You did understand my message," he said. "I had to let you know, without allowing the others to be aware that I was alive."

"Yes . . . oh yes, my darling," I said. "But I thought . . . for a few moments . . . you might be too late. . ."

"You were never in danger, for we could have stopped Philip at any moment."

"It doesn't matter now," I said. "You're alive. All else has little meaning. And . . . you have found Bess. Poor Bess . . ."

"The men I brought with me are witnesses that Philip knew where she was. I did, too, for I'd already found her body, but I dared not say so for fear I would be accused. And I was right, for they

accused me even though it was all a trick on the part of the Morgans to get me convicted of murder so they could take over the ship line. That's what they wanted and what I was determined they would never get."

"Philip admitted the murder of Captain Hoyt, who was working with them. He had also blackmailed them, which explains the money found in his cottage," I said, still pressed against his chest, secure in his arms.

"Poor Walt was a fool. His intense hatred only brought about his own end."

"But your sloop—how did you get clear of her when she caught fire?"

"There was a good wind. When the fire began, I saw that it had been started by someone, so I steered for shore. When I got as close as I dared, I lashed the helm and sent the sloop straight out to sea. It broke my heart, but it had to be done. Then I swam ashore. I had the finding of my body announced through friends I trusted."

"Thank you for the roses," I said. "And the fresh diary."

"And for covering you that night after you crept downstairs to see who was about?" he asked, teasing.

"Did you really kiss me?" I asked shyly.

"I did," he replied, his eyes holding mine. "And the footsteps—I didn't mean to frighten you, but

there are secret passages in the house, and I used them. I did a great deal of my prowling of the estate at night in the hope I might catch Philip and Earl or Captain Walt about. But I never did. They were wily, but they outdid themselves."

"Earl Morgan is at the house—or should be," I said. "I struck him with a decanter when he . . ." I didn't continue, but rather tightened my grip on Joel's arms.

"He'll be taken care of, Joel said softly. "Men were watching the house. I kept you here just long enough for them to be taken away. The men will now get Bess's body—or what is left of it."

I shuddered at the thought of the horrible end Bess had met, and I wanted to get away from this place quickly. Joel guided me carefully and tenderly away from the treacherous place.

When we were on safe ground, he said, "I'm taking you home now—to Templeton Hall. We'll be married immediately. Templeton Hall isn't going to die after all."

"Neither is the family name," I assured him.

His arm around my waist tightened, and I felt the horror of the last few days drain from my body.

And it was so, for we raised two fine sons. Under Joel's direction and with their help, the steamship line became one of the most successful

in the world. Templeton Hall, large as it was, soon had additions built, for our boys married and wished to remain with us.

Philip and Earl Morgan were convicted of murder. They were still able to use considerable influence, however, so that they were not executed, but they did serve long prison terms. When paroled, they both vanished.

The remains of Bess were interred in the family burial ground at the rear of the estate. Shortly thereafter, Joel and I were wed. Mrs. Davis soon left Templeton Hall, much to the relief of us all. She was astounded to learn the true facts, yet never apologized for her harsh, accusing words regarding Joel's guilt. Celeste eventually married, and we became close friends and are to this day.

Greta and Frank were completely unaffected by all this. They remained with us and lived to a respectable age, neither one changing their ways, though Greta did unbend with the children when they were small.

Templeton Hall is now a gay place, its life assured for more generations to come. Joel and I are as much in love as ever, and we still spend many hours on the water in a sloop, which he christened *Lorraine*. As for me, on each wedding anniversary I go to the kitchen and bake him a large cake. It has a special meaning for both of us, but the entire family joins us in the celebration.

As for the Templeton memoirs, they were never published, never even completed, nor were they meant to be. Joel had thought that, by writing them, he would frighten the murderer into revealing himself. It was a brilliant thought and a successful one.

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THE BURIED PAST

Some history should remain unwritten; some events are better off forgotten. Lorraine Ward became aware of this almost as soon as she started her strange new job at the old Templeton mansion.

Either Joel Templeton had murdered his wife or he hadn't. He claimed he was innocent and would ultimately prove the truth. Meanwhile, he lived under a cloud—a cloud large enough to envelop the entire house and its many mysterious inhabitants.

And then Lorraine found herself falling in love. In love with a murderer?

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